BEN JONSON'S IDEALS
AS REFLECTED IN HIS PLAYS

BY

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October 12, 1958.

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BEN JONSON'S IDEALS AS REFLECTED IN HIS PLAYS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
by
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EDMONTON, ALBERTA
OCTOBER 12, 1958

Synopsis

The first two sections of the thesis treat, respectively, Jonson's social and literary criticism. Although literary criticism bulks larger in Jonson's writings than does social criticism, Jonson's ridicule of the manners, morals, and pastimes of the well-to-do is considered first because he uttered much social criticism and devoted entire plays to the topic before launching seriously into literary criticism. He detested the fops who made a mockery of courtly ceremonies, and he tried so hard to demonstrate their mental vacuity that he fell into such an inconsistency as representing them, successively, as imitating the manner and bearing of learned men and as despising learned men. This inconsistency is the result of eagerness rather than insincerity, and, throughout his life, Jonson was eager to castigate men who made trivial diversions their serious studies.

The faith in reason and the insistence that men devote their higher faculties to worthy purposes that animates Jonson's social criticism is vital to his literary criticism. His very belief that the good writer must instruct as well as entertain is an affirmation of the value of reason. When Jonson utters the few comments that mark the beginning of analytical criticism in English, he again sounds his faith in reason, for his

best criticism is a rational analysis which frequently comes down to an examination of a writer's use of words.

Jonson's faith in reason gives his criticism the value of high purpose. His great capacity for logical thinking makes him a critic of impressive consistency and integrity. However, he was not dispassionate, and in the third section of the thesis the worst example of Jonson in rage is considered. His attack on Inigo Jones is dismaying, but the fervor which prompted the flings at the designer is directly related to the faith in reason and the devotion to poetry which inspired his finest work. The quarrel with Jones and the less profound gibes at the Puritans do not enhance the poet's reputation; they do add to our understanding of him.

This study defines Jonson as a man of great intellect and powerful emotions. He is not perfectly consistent, and we may even question his integrity on a few occasions, but he never dissembles. He speaks with feeling and he speaks unequivocally. All of his criticism is founded, ultimately, on his faith in reason. That all-pervading faith raises his work above the level of topical satire and establishes him as the Critic of his age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The preparation of this dissertation would not have been possible without the co-operation of the Rutherford Library. For the kindness of the Library officials, particularly the circulation librarian, Miss N. E. Freifield, in allowing me the use of indispensable books for long periods of time, I offer grateful thanks.

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Introduction

I

The Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to determine Jonson's ideals as reflected in his plays. The value of such an attempt derives from the fact that the analysis of Jonson's plays reveals a consistent didactic purpose underlying his dramatic utterances. There are moments of weakness and lapses when Jonson's anger outruns his discretion, but for the most part his plays are formed around his ideals and many of his characters are brilliant satiric impersonations.

There is a danger in confusing dramatic and direct utterances. Plays, which are works of art complete in themselves and which are shaped to dramatic conventions, cannot be equated with the real world. However, Jonson's consistently didactic purpose is served by repeated themes and recurring situations which establish the relationship between his dramatic utterances and his view of the real world.

Because Jonson is always contemptuous of the greedy man and because he always reprehends venial conduct, we can safely infer that he objects to these faults in real men. Jonson has not the scope of Shakepeare and not the breadth of understanding to see the flashes of goodness in such men as Macbeth and Anthony, and, consequently, we can detect judgements in his plays when we can only marvel at the compassionate understanding displayed in Shakespeare's plays.

The ideals observable in Jonson's plays are apparently negative as he indicates how we should not act by pouring scorn on greedy, ignorant, proud, and affected men. However, there is a positive basis for this criticism, for Jonson is always the champion of reason. He insists on the value of a well-trained mind and predicates the power of reason as the only force which can rescue men from vain fopperies and foolish lusts.

Jonson's attitude is pervadingly satiric, and he always wields a sharper pen when depicting a fop than when describing an admirable character. Inevitably then, references to Jonson as a critical commentator rather than references to Jonson as a straightforward dramatist will be drawn in this study. Still, the purpose of the study is to determine the ideals upon which the criticism is founded.

Though this study is based mainly on Jonson's plays, reference will be made to his other poetical works, to

Discoveries, and to the Conversations to substantiate the picture of the ideal world which is discernable in the plays.

In recreating Jonson's ideal world, some references will have to be made to the events of Jonson's life. However, no attempt will be made to probe Elizabethan and Jacobean history for the causes of Jonson's opinions. This paper is not a study of the man as a product of his times. There is no doubt that all men are influenced and partly formed by their environment, but the life and work of any truly great man is too complex to be reduced to a series of stimuli and responses. The very fact that Jonson had such varied contemporaries as Shakespeare, Chapman, and Greene is the best proof that something in the writer himself, something beyond the reach of the environmental psychologist, accounts for much of his particular style and attitude. This paper will concern itself with what Jonson thought, not with why he thought it.

Nor will this paper deal with Jonson's debt to classical literature. The Notes in Herford and Simpson's edition of Jonson's Works reveal the extent of the satirist's classical borrowings, and I could not hope to exceed them in this respect. There are sound reasons for not extending this study into a survey of Jonson's classical gleanings. Let it be admitted that his criticism was affected by his wide reading in Latin and Greek. To trace the effects of this reading would be an undertaking of great scope and uncertain result. Moreover, neglecting such a

survey will not detract from the value of this paper unless it is true that all of Jonson's opinions are mere echoes of classical authors. So long as there is any originality in Jonson's work, so long as he is capable of going beyond his sources, so long as he can find fresh objects of criticism in his own day, there is purpose in trying to establish the nature of that criticism apart from any attempt to determine its source. Even though Jonson was affected by his wide reading, there are in his work qualities peculiar to him which are not at all the result of redacting his favorite authors. Every man responds to the influences of the world he lives in, and books comprised a great part of Jonson's world. We should not be surprised therefore that literary echoes, particularly classical echoes, sound in his work.

Because the romantics, for example, find inspiration in the contemplation of nature we do not dismiss them as mere imitators of nature. Similarly, Jonson cannot be dismissed as a mere imitator of Greek and Roman literature. Plautus may have been his guide in the technique of plotting, Juvenal may have showed him how extremely sharp and coarse satire can become, and Cicero may have given him models for the discourse of senators and tribunes, but Jonson alone could fuse these diverse materials in railing at the follies of his own time. No mere distillation of classical reading could have produced The Alchemist.

Even _Volpone_ with its Italian setting and satire of the _captatores_ borrowed from Roman writers is original in its greatest features. The magnificent and characteristic outbursts of Volpone are, in the main, original with Jonson. Thus in the ninety lines of Act I, Scene i, there are but twelve lines which Herford and Simpson compare to classical sources, and even in these lines there is much reworking of the material, sometimes from a mere hint in the source. The finest lines are entirely Jonson's. For example:

> Yet, I glory
> More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
> Then in the glad possession; since I gaine
> No common way: I use no trade, no venter;
> I wound no earth with plow-shares; fat no beasts
> To feede the shambles; have no mills for yron,
> Oyle, corne, or men, to grinde 'hem into poulder....
> _Volpone_, I, i, 30-6

The quality of these lines and the rest of the speech is such that the gulling of greedy, foolish old men is made to seem almost virtuous. There is no doubt that the lively Volpone and the cunning Mosca have the sympathy of the reader until the very moment when they turn to adultery. One has but to compare the bold and brilliant character of Volpone to the shallow Jaques of _The Case is Altered_ to know how far beyond the stock characters of Roman comedy Jonson advanced.

So long, then, as Jonson is admitted to have originality, this study has value quite apart from the extent to which it treats his Greek and Latin scholarship. I

shall not entirely overlook this scholarship, but, as with the historical background of his work, I shall not attempt to assess its precise impact on his writings. If he borrows a phrase from Horace or a salt quip from Juvenal that borrowing will be noted, but Jonson must still be credited for recognizing and scorning the fault as displayed in his own time. Indeed, the fact that a particular vice has been condemned by earlier writers does not mean that all those who subsequently attack the vice are copying. Especially in the case of Jonson, who read so much, it is a moot point whether he first learned to despise greed and pride when he saw them denounced by Latin writers or whether he came to like those writers because he found their attitude congenial. These are questions which this paper will not deal with. Jonson's claim to originality in thought and expression cannot be denied, and it is the result of his reading, his experiences in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, his travels, his hardships and triumphs, and his own tempestuous character, taken in combination, that this paper is to assess.

II

The Material of the Study

As stated at the outset, this study is based primarily on Jonson's plays. Such sources of information

as the prose works, the masques, and the non-dramatic poetry are not ignored. *Discoveries* and the *Conversations* have been examined in detail and will be referred to, but the masques are of limited importance in trying to understand Jonson's criticism. They are not a realistic portrayal of life and are almost negligible as vehicles for serious comment. Indeed, they are so infused with polite phrases and flattering allegory that one might think the author was there doing penance for the severe strictures delivered elsewhere. Some of Jonson's fundamental ideas are displayed in the masques; his faith in intellect, for example, is broadcast in *Hymniae*. But there is little reference to particular faults of the time. In short, the masques are so far removed from the robust temper of the satirical playwright that it is hard to verify or challenge any of his critical comments, such as we find in the plays, by reference to the masques.

Though the masques show that Jonson could write well in another genre than satire, they do not reveal any additional skill in characterization or any compassionate understanding of human beings. There is little, then, in the masques, to suggest that Jonson could have been a brilliant dramatist in other than the satiric mode. The delicacy of expression displayed in the masques, the polished turns of phrase and ingenious

classical symbolism, are not the qualities which could, for example, have raised Jonson to the level of Shakespeare in tragedy. Thus, when his limitations as a dramatist are discussed, no reference will be made to the masques because his skill as a masque-maker is much less impressive evidence of his dramatic powers than are his plays. If his plays are limited in scope, his masques are much more limited.

It is, however, not enough to say that the plays provide the basic material of this study. Some explanation of how material is extracted from the plays must also be given. To make a thorough survey of Jonson's critical opinions it is necessary to examine the comments and judgements offered in all his plays and decide what consistent pattern emerges. Such a method does not consist merely of grouping all the critical remarks in his plays under various headings and adding the items. Counting words is not an act of criticism regardless of how carefully the counting is done. We must remember that Elizabethans and Jacobeans savored well-wrought phrases. They gathered sententious remarks in commonplace books and liked to hear players bandying aphorisms. Jonson was too good a writer--sometimes--to give the best of the argument always to his heroes. When the play demanded it he ably supported ideas he did not endorse. To estimate him as a critic we must ourselves

be critics and weigh his statements carefully, never wrenching them out of context or forgetting which person utters them. Fortunately, for our purpose, Jonson was didactic in excess and was particularly fond of equipping his plays with introductions and prologues which made his attitude readily apparent. If such guide-posts are heeded, the task of tracing the development and nature of his opinions is greatly simplified.

It is worth while to give an example of the process of evaluation which must be applied to the statements culled from the plays. In the first scene of the second act of The Magnetic Lady, Mrs. Keepe and Pleasance eagerly advise Mrs. Placentia in the choice of a husband:

> Placentia. Here's Mr. Practise, who is call'd to the Bench
> Of purpose. Keepe. Yes, and by my Ladies meanes--
> Pleasance. 'Tis thought to be the man.
> Keepe. A Lawyers Wife.
> Pleasance. And a fine Lawyers wife. Keepe. Is a brave calling.
>
> The Magnetic Lady, II, i, 7-10

At first glance one might see here a kind word for lawyers dropping from Jonson's pen. It might even be argued that Jonson, fond as he was of ridiculing lawyers, was here suggesting that there are some "fine" lawyers who merit a kind word. But such an argument would be wrong. Mrs. Keepe and Pleasance are gossips, they are eager to hear themselves speak, they are eager to promote a marriage, and a "fine" lawyer in their definition is one be critics and weigh his statements carefully, rather wrenching them out of context or forgetting which person utters them. Fortunately, for our purposes, Jonson was didactic in temper and was particularly fond of equipping his plays with introductions and prologues which made his intentions readily apparent. If such guide-posts are heeded, the task of tracing the development and nature of his opinions is greatly simplified.

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At first glance one might see here a kind word for lawyers dropped from Jonson's pen. It might even be argued that Jonson, fond as he was of ridiculing lawyers, was here suggesting that there are some "fine" lawyers who merit a kind word. But such an argument would be vain. Mrs. Keepe and Pleasance are gossips, less than eager to hear themselves speak, they are eager to discover a marriage, and a "fine" lawyer in their definition is one who wears a good suit of clothes. Their praise of the lawyer is not evidence of Jonson's opinion of lawyers; it is only evidence of their faulty judgement. Nor must we go too far and suggest that praise from these ladies is really nothing but a sly way for the playwright to damn. We must remain within the context of the play and accept the fact that these ladies have willy-nilly settled on a lawyer for the moment because he presents a brave outside. Ten lines later they are certain that a knight, one Sir Diaphanous Silke-Worme, is the best choice. Inasmuch as the ladies are always in favor of some character who is presented in an unfavorable light, we must finally conclude that the lines we have scanned are evidence only of their fleeting and faulty taste and do not constitute a serious judgement on the profession of law.

It is in the above manner that all critical comments quoted or referred to in this paper have been examined. I shall make no attempt to list the seemingly critical comments which have been discarded as a result of such examination, nor shall I show the grounds on which they have been discarded. Suffice it to say that I regard such selection as a part of my task. Nor have I tried to make Jonson consistent at all points by rejecting false or contradictory criticisms. I have only tried to select definite, critical statements for consideration

in this paper, hoping thus to compile a body of material which unequivocally expresses Jonson's attitudes on various subjects at different times. The question of his integrity as a critic must be resolved by a thorough sifting of the statements which have, in the first place, been accepted as real expressions of his judgement.

In studying Jonson as a critic of his time, it is necessary to make a distinction between his major ideas and the notions that were but the concern of a moment or even a season. If one tried to take into account every judgement which he ever expressed, a pattern of thought so various and involved as to be unintelligible would result. Moreover, such meaning as did emerge might be very dubious. For example, it is worthwhile to study Jonson's ideas on literature. In so doing one can detect a coherent and enduring theory of literature, and one can see how this theory affects his own work. But there would be no value in trying to rank all of his outbursts during the stage-quarrel with his more carefully considered judgements. The personal abuse of Marston and Dekker which occurs in Poetaster is not literary criticism. We take note of these remarks, not because they either prove or disprove the soundness of Jonson's literary criticism, but because they show us something of his personality. They are evidence of the irascible temper which added salt to some of his remarks while

all too often obliterating his critical objectivity. In short, we must not altogether ignore these passages of personal abuse, for they reveal some of Jonson's faults, but we must also be careful not to confuse them with his purely literary criticisms which, though by no means dispassionate, are grounded in a sounder judgement and merit careful examination. Here again, I shall take the liberty of selecting as I try to distinguish between diurnal fits of pique and more deeply held and more fully considered evaluations.

In discussing Jonson's major critical ideas, I shall attempt to show the direction of his interests, for it is obvious that there were certain main objects of his criticism. I shall undertake to display a wide range of evidence in support of these major ideas, going beyond the plays in order to clarify important points. I shall try to show how these major ideas are grounded in a particular view of the world and of mankind. The question of Jonson's critical integrity will be decided by comparing his accepted critical statements to his expressed standards of value, as well as by comparing the standards themselves.

III

The Method of the Study

The ideal method of analyzing Jonson as a critic of his time would be to go through his plays chronologically, noting each critical comment and discussing the satiric import of each character as he appears. Such a method would make it possible to pinpoint the emergence of every idea. We could then show the order in which the ideas flowed through Jonson's mind and passed into writing, and we could demonstrate which ideas concerned him most frequently. However, such a method would place an intolerable burden on the reader as many ideas would have to be kept in mind simultaneously and much restatement would have to endured. Therefore, if the critical ideas of Jonson are to be investigated through the means of anything less than a complete reprinting and study of his work, some selection and arrangement will be necessary.

The method followed here is to make a survey of the critical comments in his earliest surviving play and then to make a detailed examination of the development and later treatment of the ideas detected in his first play. Such a method will give a good idea of the order of precedence in the development of Jonson's ideas because most of his major ideas are present, at least in embryo, in his first play. The method will also serve to show

the development of his ideas by noting variations in emphasis or alterations in the nature of his ideas in different plays. Some ideas which are not bruited in his first play will have to be introduced as new topics during the discussion of later plays. The method of presentation in the thesis is therefore topical with a chronological survey of each topic. As far as possible, the topics are introduced in the same order as they appear in Jonson's work.

A careful ordering of Jonson's work is essential to such a method of presentation. The arrangement of his plays, poems, masques, and prose works made by Herford and Simpson will be followed here. That the reader may have some appreciation of the care with which the Oxford Editors evolved their Jonson canon, I shall review their arguments regarding the time of composition of the first two extant plays.

Herford and Simpson believe that the first of Jonson's extant plays is A Tale of a Tub. In support of this claim C. H. Herford cites: allusions to the Queen,[1] the verse of the play as compared to the verse of plays that can be definitely dated,[2] the unelaborated plot,[3] and the

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[1] C. H. Herford and P. Simpson, Ben Jonson, Oxford, 1925-52, Vol. I, p. 279

[2] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., pp. 284-9 Herford here points out that in such early works as the Quarto Edition of Every Man in His Humour "hardly

lack of "allegorizing pedantry which was responsible for so much learned symbolism in plays of all periods after the first",[4] and the lack of character elaboration.[5] Simpson agrees with Herford and discusses the early element in the play in a detailed note[6] in which he elaborates the importance of the lack of characterization and the absence of the "humours" which Jonson utilized in all his other comedies. Simpson also refutes Miss Snell's analysis of the percentage of extra syllables in the play and makes the case of the Oxford Editors entirely convincing.

The two editors offer the following explanation of the composition of the play as we now have it: Parts of the play were written at least as early as *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), but several passages of ridicule directed at Inigo Jones could not possibly have been written so early. Moreover, two distinct styles of writing,

> a line has less than ten syllables, or more than eleven... 'light' or 'weak' endings are rare, and the normal movement and structure of the metre are scrupulously emphasized. In the later plays, on the contrary, while the five-foot norm is on the whole strictly observed, it is as if for the purpose of playing fast and loose with all the other norms--number of syllables, verse music, recognition of metrical breaks in the sense pauses; while all colloquial abbreviations and elisions are freely admitted." He goes on to show how much of this early subjugation to form there is in *A Tale of a Tub*.

[3] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 290-94

[4] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, p. 290

[5] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 294-99 The argument here is as convincing as the argument based on analysis of the play's verse.

[6] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IX, pp. 268-75

marked by differences in the verse and the use of rhyme, are discernible in the play. It is most likely that the play was one of Jonson's first, and that he never esteemed it worthy of inclusion in the editions of his works.[7] The first performance of the play was in 1634 after Jonson had been discarded as court masque-maker and was bitter towards Inigo Jones. It was at this time that Jonson took up his hitherto unpublished play, rewrote certain scenes and lines in order to satirize Jones, checked over the complete text with particular attention to the first act, and issued it as a new play.

The greater part of the play's satire relates to Inigo Jones and must therefore be accepted as among the last of Jonson's work. In view of the fact that the entire play shows evidence of later retouching, with the two verse styles intermixed from beginning to end, I shall not begin the survey of Jonson's criticism with this play. Material which has been edited years after its composition is not truly early material.

If A Tale of a Tub is not to be the starting point, The Case is Altered is the next possibility. The Case is Altered presents us with a problem of date plus a

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[7] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 143 The conversations with Drummond are here printed in full, and line 393 reads: "The half of his comedies wére not in Print."

problem of authorship. The problem of authorship is not very serious, but the Oxford Editors discuss it with their usual scrupulous care. The main arguments against Jonson's authorship are that it was not included in the edition of his works (1616), nor in the second volume of his works (1630-41), nor in the Folio of 1692.[8] However, Jonson, in 1616, printed only those pieces by which he wished to be judged, leaving out several tragedies referred to by Meres, and as has been already noted,[9] he told Drummond in 1619 that half of his works were not in print. Under these circumstances it is quite possible that Jonson wrote the play but was reluctant to acknowledge it. His name appears on the title page of the surviving copies of the Quarto of 1609, with the exception that it is missing from the second title page of one copy. This oversight was remedied by adding the name before many copies had been run off, and Jonson's claim to authorship seems sound.[10]

That the play was written very early is strongly suggested by three matters of style. Jonson does not here introduce the "humours" that predominate in his major comedies. The plot, though ingenious, is largely derived from Plautus and lacks the unity achieved in

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[8] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 305

[9] See note 7.

[10] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 305, Vol. IV, pp. 95-6

his later work. There is a plot and a sub-plot rather than the single plot with ramifications such as we find in his greatest comedies. Finally, the elaboration of character which was very evident in Every Man in His Humour is lacking here. The play also fails to serve the severe didactic purpose of Every Man out of His Humour or Cynthia's Revels. Thus, the best and worst qualities of the later Jonson are not to be found in The Case is Altered, which suggests a date prior to the writing of Every Man in His Humour. The only positive evidence to the contrary is the satire directed against Anthony Munday which could not have dated from earlier than 1600. The Oxford Editors regard this satire as a group of additions made without serious revision of the play about 1600.[11] The lack of thorough revision is attested by the fact that when the character, Balladino, was introduced to satirize Munday, the dialogue of the play was not checked carefully enough to avoid confusion over the request for a ballad. Juniper asks Balladino for a ballad:

> ...thou shalt make him some prety Paradox
> or some Aligory....
> The Case is Altered, I, ii, 14-15
> [12]

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[11] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 305-7

[12] All quotations from Jonson follow the text of the Oxford Editors except in the use of certain letters. Some archaic usages preserved in that edition are supressed here, thus: V in the Oxford Edition becomes U here, U becomes V, I becomes J, and F becomes S. These changes are not invariably needed and are made only when modern usage clearly requires

But a later bit of dialogue shows that in the original version Valentine had been requested to write the ballad. Onion protests to Juniper about Valentine's failure to produce the ballad:

> Your Ingle, hang him infidell.... I spake to him for a ditty for this handkerchier.
> Juniper. Why, has he not done it?
> Onion. Done it, not a verse by this hand.
> *Ibid.*, IV, v, 34-9

We may suppose that Jonson, within two or three years of writing the play, made some hasty additions for the purpose of satirizing Anthony Munday. The play was not rigorously altered, and, with the exception of the passages directed at Munday, we may accept it as Jonson's earliest surviving work. It is with *The Case is Altered* that the survey of Jonson's criticism begins.

I shall not again go to such lengths in discussing the date of Jonson's plays. I have done so here partly for the purpose of indicating the care with which the Oxford Editors have considered problems of date and authorship and partly for the purpose of explaining my choice of a starting point. Except in their discussion of Jonson's connection with the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, Herford and Simpson do not again find it necessary to treat these problems at such length. However, their discussions are always adequate, and I am content

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a change. Occasionally, an omitted letter is added, thus: "wth" is expanded to "with" (*Ungathered Verse*, XXXV).

to follow their ordering of Jonson's works without further explanation.

A word of caution is needed before passing on to the study of Jonson's critical opinions. In the first section of the study, the subject is Jonson's social criticism. The term, "social criticism", is here restricted in meaning so as to include only the criticism of the manners, morals, and pastimes of people in the upper class. Such social criticism naturally reflects on people of any lower class who aspire to become proficient in the follies and excesses of the high-born fools. In truth, the upper class castigated by Jonson was more often an aristocracy of wealth rather than birth, but anyone who disgraced a noble name or consumed a fortune in the practice of polite diversions aroused his ire.

I

Social Satire

A. First Indications of Interest

1. False Friendship and its Causes

Except for a reference to Munday, which may be disregarded for the time as later work, the first critical comment in *The Case is Altered* is an observation on friendship by Paulo Ferneze:

> Deare *Angelo*, you are not every man,
> But one, whome my election hath design'd,
> As the true proper object of my soule:
> I urge not this t'insinuate my desert,
> Or supple your tri'd temper, with soft phrases;
> True frendship lothes such oyly complement....
> *The Case is Altered*, I, vi, 30-5

Friendship, or rather, false friendship proves to be the subject of much attention in the play. Demonstrations of duplicity are numerous. The first act of treachery occurs even before the play begins, for we learn in the

first scene of the second act that Jaques is the once-trusted steward of Chamont who stole his treasure and daughter. Angelo betrays the trust of Paulo and seeks Rachel for himself after being left to protect her in Paulo's absence. Angelo is also false to the steward, Christophero, who seeks his aid in wooing Rachel. Christophero is also betrayed by his own master, Count Ferneze, who first approves Christophero's suit and then tries to secure the girl for himself. Onion, the merest of Rachel's suitors, is drawn from his suit by the sight of her father's gold. We might then conclude that *The Case is Altered* is a satire on the faithlessness that is expressed in Onion's words upon sighting Jaques' gold:

> *The case is alterd* with me, my heart has given
> love a box of the eare....
> Farewell sweete
> *Rachel*, sweet dogge adiew.
> *Ibid*., IV, ix, 49

Such a conclusion would not do justice to Jonson, for it would overlook entirely the tendency towards analysis and elaboration which is apparent even in the opening years of his career. Though the satire in *The Case is Altered* is mild and meager in comparison with his later floods of criticism, it reveals his habit of character analysis. It is not false friendship which is examined in this play so much as the causes of faithlessness. And the causes which Jonson discerns are twofold: greed and sexual desire.

The comments on false friendship define these causes. The only comment on friendship per se is the statement by Paulo already quoted. Other comments which reveal Jonson's conception of the causes of faithlessness occur in the following order:

> Jaques. The end of flattery, is gaine, or lechery.
> Ibid., II, i, 15

In the same soliloquy Jaques goes on to emphasize how greed makes men false:

> ...ô wondrous pelfe,
> ,,That which makes all men false, is true it selfe.
> Ibid., II, i, 30-31

The importance of these last lines as a direct comment is indicated by the gnomic punctuation Jonson has given them. Angelo himself is made to express the feelings which sway a man from the course of true friendship:

> S'bloud am not I a man?
> Have I not eyes that are as free to looke?
> And bloud to be enflam'd as well as his?
> And when it is so, shall I not pursue
> Mine owne loves longings, but preferre my friends?
> I tis a good foole, do so, hang me then.
> Because I swore? alas, who doo's not know,
> That lovers perjuries are ridiculous?
> Ibid., III, i, 11-18

There is in the play a satire on greed which does more than present it merely as a motive for falsehood. This satire is centred in the character of Jaques who is, for the most part, a stock figure lifted from Roman comedy. He is no great villain such as Volpone; he is distinguished only by his characteristic fear of discovery. He is passive during the entire play, trying only to keep

what he has previously stolen. Charles Lamb could discuss him as a representative of a type of greed not readily appreciated even in his time:

> The passion for wealth has worn out much of its grossness in tract of time. Our ancestors certainly conceived of money as able to confer a distinct gratification in itself, not considered simply as a symbol of wealth. The old poets, when they introduce a miser, make him address his gold as his mistress; as something to be seen, felt, and hugged; as capable of satisfying two of the senses at least. The substitution of a thin, unsatisfying medium in the place of the good old tangible metal, has made avarice quite a Platonic affection in comparison with the seeing, touching, and handling pleasures of the old Chrysophilites. A bank note can no more satisfy the touch of a true sensualist in this passion, than Creusa could return her husband's embrace in the shades. See the cave of Mammon in Spenser; Barabas' contemplation of his wealth in the Rich Jew of Malta; Luke's raptures in the City Madam; the idolatry and absolute gold-worship of the miser Jaques in this early comic production of Ben Jonson's.[1]

Thus Jaques is a character who has none of the satiric import of Volpone, Epicure Mammon, or Sordido. None of the worst effects of greed are made manifest in Jaques, for he shows none of the furious ambition and very little of the immorality, the indifference to the rights and welfare of others, which is common in the greedy men of Jonson's finest plays. Only that ludicrous demonstration of the futility of greed, the stratagem of burying the gold under a heap of dung, affords a

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[1] Charles Lamb, Specimens, quoted by Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 320

brilliant indication of Jonson's effectiveness in satire. Though the satire on greed is not exhaustive or very severe, it is a true indication of Jonson's thinking, for throughout his life he castigated greed as one of the prime faults of men.

It was not only greed in the narrow, monetary, sense which Jonson deprecated, and it is not only in his social satires that he stresses the evil effects of greed. Thus, the real weakness of Sejanus, as Jonson understands him, is that his tremendous ambition outruns his wisdom and makes him imprudent. His overwhelming thirst for power and glory blinds him to the fact that an ambition which advances at the expense of other men breeds such hatred as it advances that it can never be secure. There can be no stopping, no safe plateau on which to rest, no certain contentment for him who rises by the fall of others. So full of pride and confident of his ability is Sejanus that he admits no man his equal and scorns to accept anything but obsequiousness from others. In a moment of fear he stoops to offer some kind words to his followers and they remark:

> Cotta. His lordship is turn'd instant kind,
> me thinkes, I'have not observ'd it in him,
> heretofore.
> Tribune I. 'Tis true, and it becomes him
> nobly.
>
> Sejanus, V, 314-16

But when Sejanus again feels secure he deprecates his

gentle words:

> How vaine, and vile a passion is this feare?
> What base, uncomely things it makes men doe?
> Suspect their noblest friends, (as I did this)
> Flatter poore enemies, intreat their servants,
> Stoupe, court, and catch at the benevolence
> Of creatures, unto whom (within this houre)
> I would not have vouchsaf'd a quarter-looke,
> Or piece of face?
>
> Ibid., V, ll. 383-90

Because Sejanus is greedy for an emperor's diadem rather than for money we call him ambitious. But in pursuing his ambition he displays the complete indifference to the rights of others which is the worst effect of greed. This indifference, which enables him to commit any crime without hesitation, indicates a narrowness of mind which Jonson would not allow in any truly great man.

Jaques' initial appearance is in the first scene of the second act, and with his characteristic fearful suspicion, he is pondering the number of young men of good station who resort to his house. In the second scene of the third act, Christophero comes to ask Jaques for his daughter in marriage. Jaques, as usual, suspects that his gold is the real object of the suit, and between protests to Christophero that he can give no dowry, he keeps rushing off to see that the treasure is safe. The Oxford Editors point out that this display of his fearful and suspicious nature is modelled on the miser

in Plautus' Aulularia.[2] Jaques is made to express his attitude:

> To have gold, and to have it safe, is all.
> The Case is Altered, III, V, 28

It is the negative aspects of greed that are most clearly seen in the presentation of Jaques. Having secured a store of treasure in one stroke of daring, he has ceased to be aggressive and is only able to admire and fear for what he has seized. The folly of excessive greed is clearly evident in the foibles of this miser, but the delineation of such a character was a mere beginning for his creator, who was not long to remain such an imitator of Plautine comedy.

More in the spirit of the later Jonson is Jaques' summary of the motives of Rachel's suitors:

> What servile villainies, men will do for gold.
> Ibid., III, v, 5

The remark is borrowed from the Aeneid and indicates that Jonson was taking ideas from the ancients rather than launching into original criticism. But in spite of the extent to which The Case is Altered is formed on classical models it gives us a true sample of Jonson's interest and method.

It has already been noted that another cause of false friendship in the play was sexual desire. Sexual

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[2] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 320

desire is an important motive in some later plays. It leads Volpone beyond shrewdness and success to disaster; it produces dissension among Subtle, Face and Doll as well as providing Subtle with an excuse for the failure of his projections in behalf of Sir Epicure Mammon, and it leads Knockhum and Whit to take advantage of Win Little-Wit and Dame Overdoo. Love in an idealized presentation is also prominent in some plays. With unusual grace, Jonson portrays the passion of Wittipol for Mistress Fitzdottrel in The Devil is an Ass while asserting that marriage should be sacrosanct and enduring. Lovel, in paying court to Lady Frampul in The New Inn, expounds Platonic love in a discourse based on the Symposium of Plato.[3] Jonson's conception of love will be discussed in more detail later; it is here only necessary to recognize that love is a common motive in his plays and is presented in all degrees from the merely sensual to the purely idealistic. We may take the references to sexual desire in the The Case is Altered as early expressions of ideas which were to be examined and developed through many years. The two direct comments on sexual desire as

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3. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. X, p. 318 The long note, discussing lines 65-200 of III, ii, shows Jonson's indebtedness to Plato and other classical writers.

a cause of treachery have already been quoted while discussing false friendship. In addition, the treachery of Angelo and Count Ferneze is motivated by this desire. Much of the plot is founded on the desirability of Rachel, while a little action develops from the courting of Phoenixella and Aurelia. There is one more direct comment on the power of passion in Count Ferneze's words as he contemplates Rachel:

> For where love is he thinke(s) his basest object
> Gentle and noble:
> ...
> Love hates delayes.
>
> *Ibid.*, II, vi, 42-3, 48

The last of these lines is based on Ovid.[4] The treatment of love in the play is much more superficial than the satire on greed. The words of the Count are the only suggestion of an analysis of the subject. Love was never a subject which Jonson was able to handle well, and in treating it he was more prone to draw on his reading than he was when handling some other topics. We will find deeper analyses of love in later plays, but for the same reason that the romantic element of *The Case is Altered* is cold and stilted when compared to *As You Like It* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, these analyses are academic and unsympathetic.

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[4] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 317

2. Human Worth

There are in the play a number of comments on the qualities of nobility which are the first examples of an extensive series of comments on the qualities of men. In the first act Paulo Ferneze admonishes Angelo:

> Didst thou neare read in difference of good,
> Tis more to shine in vertue then in bloud?
>
> *Ibid.*, I, x, 37-8

Angelo himself accuses Paulo of being sententious, but Paulo is one of the more admirable figures in the play while Angelo behaves villainously. We shall find Jonson frequently insisting on the quality of men as something apart from their rank in society. Indeed, it is men of rank, women of fashion, and habitués of court who receive some of his most furious invective. In the fifth act, when Rachel is discovered to be of higher birth than a beggar's daughter, Paulo declares, in words which do not accord with his earlier utterance:

> I see that honours flames cannot be hid,
> No more then lightening in the blackest cloud.
>
> *Ibid.*, V, xii, 103-4

The apparent contradiction in Paulo's two statements about human worth requires clarification by reference to other statements. Five comments from five plays affirm that a man's worth is something apart from his breeding or wealth:

> Kno'Well. Nor, stand so much on your gentilitie,
> Which is an aerie, and meere borrow'd thing,
> From dead mens dust, and bones: and none of yours
> Except you make, or hold it.
>
> *Every Man in His Humour*, I, i, 86-9

Vertue, without presumption, place may take
Above best Kings, whom onely she should make.
Poetaster, V, ii, 26-7

Cato thus addresses Cicero:

Good MARCUS TULLIUS (which is more, then great)...
Catiline, V, 99

Peni-Boy, the father, says of Pyed-Mantle, the Herald:

He can give *Armes*, and *markes*, he cannot *honour*,
No more then *money* can make *Noble*: It may
Give place, and ranke, but it can give no Vertue.
The Staple of News, IV, iv, 156-8

The Nurse utters this protest against Beaufort's desire to dissolve his marriage to a supposedly poor lady:

Is poverty a vice? Beaufort. Th'age counts
it so.
Nurse. ...
And helpe the number o' the vertuous,
If poverty be a crime. You may object
Our beggery to us, as an accident,
But never deeper, no inherent basenesse.
The New Inn, V, v, 56, 59-62

Jonson understood "vertue" to be the quality which made a man speak the truth, act in the best interest of the commonwealth, or follow the conclusions of his honest and generous thought regardless of the cost to himself. His models of virtue were men like Crites, who perceived the follies of the base courtiers and shunned them; or statesmen like Cicero, who diligently investigated the schemes of Catiline and took action against them despite the scorn and opposition of envious enemies.* Particularly

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* The historical Cicero, who veered with every shift of the political wind, should not be confused with Jonson's hero. The poet ignored the orator's duplicity and the fact that Cicero returned Caesar's generous treatment with backbiting--from a safe distance.

in the character of Cicero can we observe two of the essentials of virtue: intelligence and courage. Lovel's discourse on "true valour" affords the best evidence of Jonson's conception of virtue. These excerpts sum up his basic convictions:

> It springs out of reason,
> And tends to perfect honesty, the scope
> Is alwayes honour, and the publique good:
> It is no valour for a private cause.
>
> I never thought an angry person valiant:
> Vertue is never ayded by a vice.
>
> ...so a minde affecting,
> Or undertaking dangers, for ambition,
> Or any selfe pretext, not for the publique,
> Deserves the name of daring, not of valour.
> _The New Inn_, IV, iv, 44-7, 64-5, 116-9 [5]

Honesty alone, then, does not make a virtuous man. It must be combined with intelligence, courage, and generosity. The worth of a virtuous man was not to be confused with his material prosperity or with his lineage.

How can faith in the divine right of kings and respect for birth as an indication of individual worth be reconciled with such an attitude? Jonson did accept the divine right of kings, for he wrote:

> ;; ...Kings
> ,,Are here on earth the most conspicuous
> things:
> ,,That they, by Heaven, are plac'd upon
> his throne,

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[5] Herford and Simpson, _Op. cit._, vol. X, pp. 324-5, suggest that the first two passages follow Seneca and that the third passage follows Cicero.

> ,,To rule like Heaven; and have no more,
> ''their owne,
> ,,As they are men, then men.
> "A Panegyre on the entrance of James to his first high Session of Parliament", 77-81

With typical audacity, the poet interprets the theory of divine right in his own terms and asserts that kings are stewards of the Lord to rule for the good of Heaven and not for their own good. Elsewhere he wrote:

> After God, nothing is to be lov'd of man like the Prince: He violates nature, that doth it not with his whole heart. For when hee hath put on the care of the publike good, and common safety; I am a wretch, and put of man, if I doe not reverence, and honour him....
> Discoveries, 986-90

Again, insistence on divine right is tempered with insistence on the obligations of kings.

In the epigram entitled, "To Mary Lady Wroth", he said:

> How well, faire crowne of your faire sexe, might hee,
> That but the twi-light of your sprite did see,
> And noted for what flesh such soules were fram'd,
> Know you to be a SYDNEY, though un-nam'd?
> And, being nam'd, how little doth that name
> Need any Muses praise to give it fame?
> Epigram, CIII, 1-6

Do we dismiss this praise as a polite compliment and not regard it as a serious expression of respect for distinguished ancestry? Before making a decision, it is well to consider two contradictory comments. He disparages the multitude:

> The vulgar are commonly ill-natur'd; and

> alwayes grudging against their *Governours*: which makes, that a Prince has more busines, and trouble with them, then ever *Hercules* had with the Bull, or any other beast....
>
> *Discoveries*, 972-5

But later he writes:

> But let them looke over all the great, and monstruous wickednesses, they shall never find those in poore families. They are the issue of the wealthy *Giants*, and the mighty Hunters: Whereas no great worke, or worthy of praise, or memory, but came out of poore cradles. It was the ancient poverty, that founded Common-weales....
>
> *Ibid.*, 1363-8

How comes it that the multitude, which should have a monopoly of poverty, are the greatest annoyance in a state if it is true that poverty has been the spawning-bed of the worthiest activities? No reconciliation of these two statements is possible.

We may sympathize with Jonson's confusion in such a welter of conflicting ideas. His speculations and his critical analyses made him suspect claims to greatness based only on ancestry. He saw that men of noble birth could be fools or villains. He had pride in his own accomplishments and would not deny his humble origin. But he lived in a time when the divine right of kings was only beginning to be questioned, and his strong religious belief prevented him from being a questioner. He was also a native of a great city and could not but see the vulgarity and meanness which the multitude can sink to. Out of these conflicting observations [redacted]

and beliefs evolved a pattern of thought not entirely consistent.

Fundamentally, Jonson believed that human worth could only be estimated by observing human behavior and judging its quality. However, the opportunites for education, travel, and varied associations that result from being born into a wealthy family facilitate distinguished performance. Unfortunately, the opportunities resulting from wealth also facilitate the descent to utter disgrace. Jonson disdained wealthy men who abused their good fortune, while at the same time he remained confident that a member of a good family could enjoy an all round training not to be attained in a day by any upstart _nouveau riche_. Years of association with the best our civilization has to offer produce the noble character admired by Jonson. Because of this belief, Jonson was always fond of such sallies as the following:

> Juniper. Wilt thou sell thy Lordship _Count_?
> Count. What? peasants purchase Lordships?
> Juniper. Is that any Novels sir?
> _The Case is Altered_, V, xiii, 15-16

The same atttidue underlies Jonson's anger at the degradation of knighthood which will be discussed later.

His conviction that kings ruled by divine right must be accepted as a matter of religious faith beyond the power of reason to challenge. His occasional indications of respect for an individual's lineage are not incompatible with his insistence upon individual accomplishment as the

measure of human worth. In addition to the general advantages afforded by noble birth, which have already been discussed, there is something to be said for heredity. Even the casual observer, and Jonson was more than a casual observer, notes family resemblances. Closer observation shows that many children do reflect the character and intelligence of their parents while others do not. Thus there can be persons who have the happiness to inherit distinguished qualities and who, if they put these gifts to good use, may be saluted as worthy preservers of noble names.

One possible objection to Jonson's respect for some people's descent could be that he was only indulging in expected exercises of polite flattery when writing epigrams to William Roe, Sir Lucius Cary, the Earl of Newcastle, Sir Edward Coke, the Earl of Pembroke, *et al.* However, even if Jonson is less critical than usual in these salutes, they are not completely insincere. He did respect these people, and in many instances history has afforded them a like respect. Occasionally his praise was extravagant, as in the epigram, "To the Ghost of Martial":

> MARTIAL, thou gav'st farre nobler *Epigrammes*
> To thy DOMITIAN, than I can to my JAMES:
> But in my royall subject I passe thee,
> Thou flattered'st thine, mine cannot
> flatter'd bee.
>
> *Epigram XXXVI*

But the usual temper of these pieces was respect qualified by confidence in his own worth and a consequent willingness to combine advice or reprimand with praise. This special attitude is evident in the epigram, "To K. Charles (for a 100. pounds he sent me in my sicknesse)":

Great CHARLES, among the holy gifts of grace
Annexed to thy Person, and thy place,
'T is not enough (thy pietie is such)
To cure the call'd Kings Evill with thy touch;
But thou wilt yet a Kinglier mastrie trie,
To cure the Poëts Evill, Povertie:
And, in these Cures, do'st so thy selfe enlarge,
As thou dost cure our Evill, at thy charge.
Nay, and in this, thou show'st to value more
One Poët, then of other folke ten score.
O pietie! so to weigh the poores estates!
O bountie! so to difference the rates!
What can the Poët wish his King may doe,
But, that he cure the Peoples Evill too?
The Under-wood, LXII

One result of these ideas of human worth was the ridicule directed against foolish aspirations toward gentility. An early example of this ridicule is afforded by the two pages, Pacue and Finio, coming to practise the gestures and phrases of greeting. Before their rehearsal is ended, they attract Onion into the pastime.[6] Such scenes of fatuous practice of foppish skills are expanded and heightened in Cynthia's Revels. Jonson detested men who earned a living by the flexure of a supple knee and who would rather stain their honor than soil a suit. A mild comment which nonetheless gives clear evidence of Jonson's dislike of men who were nothing but form is Phoenixella's

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6. The Case is Altered, IV, iii

reproof to Francisco:

> Those cerimonies are too common signior Francis,
> For your uncommon gravitie, and judgement,
> And fits them onely, that are nought but cerimony.
> The Case is Altered II, iv, 44-6

Another type of person scorned by Jonson was the cowardly boaster. Sometimes these boasters were gallants, sometimes they merely sought to keep company with gallants, but always they reflect Jonson's familiarity with the braggart soldiers of Roman Comedy. Bobadill and Tucca are splendid examples of the type as conceived by Jonson. He did not persist in developing the type however, and turning from mere ridicule of the braggart he presented cravens such as Daw and La Foole, and blusterers like Kastrill who sought to learn how to bandy insults and abuse but never thought of resorting to arms. One scene in The Case is Altered gives a hint of the braggarts to come when Onion has cudgels brought in, finally persuades Martino to a bout, is knocked on the head, and with a profusion of fencing terms explains how Martino was able to prevail.[7] The satire here is entirely at the expense of the braggart; there is no cowardice in Onion. In later plays where character was more fully developed cowardice becomes a fault of the braggarts. Here we have but the beginnings of one of Jonson's ideas, and we shall see how the idea became more his own and less an echo of Roman comedy.

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7. The Case is Altered, II, vii, 83-125

3. The Value of Reason

The last important idea to be noted in The Case is Altered is Jonson's belief in the primacy of reason. As a champion of intellect he frequently smothers dramatic action under an impossible burden of analysis, elaboration, and didacticism. His most passionate pleas are that men should use their reason and curb their passions. The grave Phoenixella has a melancholy trait which could be accepted in romantic comedy, but she is removed from all the levels of action in the play by her intellectualism. She parries her suitors coldly rather than sadly, and her prolonged mourning is not a romantic cultivation of sorrow; it conceals her distaste of the frivolities of life. Perhaps it is dangerous to carry character analysis very far when dealing with this play, so let the quotations serve as evidence of her intellectualism.

> I meane that happy pleasure of the soule,
> Devine and sacred contemplation
> Of that eternall, and most glorious blisse,
> Proposed as the crowne unto our soules.
>
> Ibid., II, iv, 35-8

If contemplation is thus offered as an ideal, the passionate man is as surely rebuked when Rachel cries out against Angelo:

> ... can it be,
> That men should live with such unfeeling soules,
> Without or touch of conscience or religion,
> Or that their warping appetites should spoile
> Those honor'd formes....
>
> Ibid., V, viii, 14-18

Both these quotations have intimations of religious faith as well as respect for the mind, but in the long run Jonson has more to say about the value and function of reason than about the nature of religion.

In resumé we note that an interesting pattern of human faults and motivational desires is suggested in Jonson's earliest surviving play. Greed and sexual desire, when unrestrained by wisdom or honor, are seen to lead men to treachery. Some men who have more vanity than wisdom are led to seek higher social position -- if they can find an easy way of encompassing their object. The value of reason is not only to be inferred from the difficulties which befall those characters who act stupidly; it is directly insisted upon. Also, the braggart, whose tongue outruns his ability, is chided.

B. The Concentration upon Social Satire.

1. The Judgement of the Would-be Gallants.

The theme of satire in The Case is Altered which is pursued most assiduously in the next play, Every Man in his Humor, is the foolish desire to attain social standing.

Jonson does not condemn all the members of polite society. He attacks the people who can only judge men by their clothes and manners and who have no appreciation

of greater accomplishments. It is the stupidity of such people that mainly arouses his ire. A foolish character who provides some of the first good evidence of Jonson's satirical power is Stephen.[8] In the first scene of Every Man in his Humor, Stephen announces he has "a hawke, and bels and all" and lacks "nothing but a booke to keepe it by".[9] His purpose in mastering hawking is to prove himself a gentleman, for he firmly believes that if "a man have not skill in hawking and hunting now a daies ... hee is for no gentlemans company".[10] Jonson was not ridiculing Stephen alone; he was indicating the whole social group that had made manners, courtship, gaming, swearing, and quarreling its prime objects. Kno'well expresses Jonson's estimation of Stephen's kind:

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[8] This name is applied to the character in the 1616 Folio. In referring to this play I shall use the names of the revised Folio version while the quotations will use the wording of the Quarto of 1601. The changes from the Quarto to the Folio are mechanical rather than creative, and though slight alterations are often made in the wording, the thought is essentially the same. If the earlier version of the play is examined carefully there is no need to deal extensively with the revised edition.

[9] Every Man in His Humour, Quarto, I, i, 34-5

[10] Loc. cit., 38-40

> Go to, you are a prodigal, and selfe-wild foole,
> ....
> I would not have you to intrude your selfe
> In everie gentlemans societie,
> Till their affections or your owne desert,
> Do worthily invite you to the place.
> ....
> Let not your cariage, and behaviour taste
> Of affectation, lest while you pretend
> To make a blaze of gentrie to the world
> A little puffe of scorne extinguish it.
> Every Man in His Humour, I, i, 46-71

Stephen does not heed the advice and keeps striving to master what he presumes to be the arts of gentility.

Stephen and Matthew are designated in the list of characters as "gulls", a clear reference to their failure to act sensibly. Edward Kno'well and Well-bred are two high spirited young men who make no greater contribution to society than do the gulls, but in Jonson's view they are partly redeemed by their intelligence. The best representatives of this character type outside of Every Man in his Humor are Dauphine, Clerimont, and True-wit in Epicoene. These witty, high spirited and sometimes irresponsible young men serve some of the functions of the crafty slaves of Plautine comedy, but they are no mere echoes of Roman comedy. They also serve to point up the foolishness of the fops and the base courtiers. These young schemers are also proof that Jonson was not denouncing the pursuit of pleasure. High spirits and mirth were not reprehended by him; he was no stranger to mirth -- and taverns -- himself. It was the exclusive pursuit of pleasure and complete absorption in the trivia

of fashion and manners that he condemned. Jonson was not an unalterable opponent of pleasure; he was a champion of intellect. He would not ask men to forswear all the enjoyments of life but only to remember:

> It is not pould'ring, perfuming, and every day smelling of the taylor, that converteth to a beautiful object: but a mind, shining through any sute, which needes no false light either of riches, or honors to helpe it.
>
> Cynthia's Revels, Dedication, 13-17

In Cynthia's Revels we find the best example of Jonson's insistence upon intellect, for Crites, the self-controlled scholar who is his creator's spokesman is above all a champion of intellect. Mr. C. H. Herford, in his introduction to Cynthia's Revels, states:

> If the inner mind of Jonson, his intellectual ascendance, ever finds full utterance, it is in some of these Critean invectives against the debasement which leaves the "best and understanding part" of man, the "crowne and strength of all his faculties", to
>
> Floate like a dead drown'd bodie, on
> the streame
> Of vulgar humour, mixt with commonst
> dregs. 11.

Jonson, stubborn and truculent, advocating the standards of classicism while English drama was reaching its height and developing its own forms, was an industrious man. He wrote not less than nineteen plays, a few of them outstanding, found time to compile an English grammar and to write the finest masques ever presented at court. He

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11. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 412

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11. Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 412

produced, in addition, great quantities of ungathered verse, some translations of classic authors and a great deal of work which perished in a fire in his lodgings. If his judgement was not always sound it must still be admitted that his accomplishments were considerable. He was a man who valued accomplishment, who judged other men in terms of accomplishment and demonstrated ability. His insistence upon intelligence and accomplishment as the truest measures of human worth had other important consequences besides their effects on his criticisms of "high society". These other effects will be noted during the discussion of other critical opinions.

Having said this much of the standards by which social ambition and pastimes were judged, it now remains to review the comments found in the plays.

Stephen and Matthew coming from the country and the town are two foolish young men with social aspirations in whom the social satire centres in Every Man in his Humor. Captain Bobadill, while not a focus for the satire of manners and fashion, provides a useful means of showing how Stephen and Matthew readily accept glib protestations in lieu of actual performance. He is also Matthew's instructor in some of the skills of the typical gallant. Downright, the plain squire, delivers blunt commentaries

on some of this foppishness and in so doing provides a foretaste of the relentless didacticism of Jonson's next three plays. Edward Kno'well, Brayne-worme and Well-bred conspire to amuse themselves at the expense of the gulls, Kno'well senior, and Kitely. This group of characters includes all those who are important to the social satire.

The first of this satire occurs in the opening scene, and Stephen's plan to become a gentleman by mastering falconry has been referred to above. Stephen displays other traits of the fop in this scene. When a servingman enters with a letter, Stephen must boast of the wealth of his uncle and the possible value of his own inheritance.[12.] He then takes the servingman's modest reply as an insult and falls to abusing and threatening him until Kno'well tires of his foolish display and orders Stephen into the house.[13.] Thus does Stephen manifest the vain pride and the cowardly love of quarreling when there is no danger of being called to account which usually characterize the fops of Jonson's plays. When the servingman is on his way again Stephen reappears professing a desire to encounter him. It is suggested that he could take horse and catch the fellow, but he protests that he cannot ride in pursuit because he has no boots.[14.]

12. Jonson, B. Every Man in his Humor, I, i, ll. 81-5
13. Loc. cit., ll. 87-111
14. Op. cit., I, ii, ll. 15-39

The desperate desire of a fatuous and inept man to claim what credit he can is again revealed in Stephen's conversation with Brayne-worme:

> Stephen. Fo, the stockings be good inough for this time of the yeere; but Ile have a payre of silke, e're it be long: I thinke, my legge would shewe well in a silke hose.
> Brayne-worme. I afore God would it rarely well.
> Stephen. In sadnesse I thinke it would:
> I have a reasonable good legge.
> Ibid., I, ii, 45-50

Stephen is not infrequently made to appear utterly stupid. In talking to Edward Kno'well he again becomes argumentative:

> By God, but I will sir, by your leave ile protest more to my friend then ile speake of at this time.
> Ibid., I, ii, 90-1

His "friend", of course, is Kno'well. Young Kno'well persuades Stephen to come to Florence with him and also persuades him to assume a more affected attitude. Stephen, eager as always to accomplish gentility with a gesture, agrees:

> ...I will be more melancholie, and gentleman-like then I have beene....
> Ibid., I, ii, 113-14

The first comment on the character of Matthew is given by Cob, a working man who has a common man's dislike of the lazy fops:

> ...his father's an honest man, a good fishmonger, and so forth: and now doth he creep and wriggle into acquaintance with all the brave gallents about the towne....
> ...and there he sits a whole afternoone sometimes, reading of these same abhominable, vile,

> (a poxe on them, I cannot abide them) rascally verses, Poetrie, poetrie, and speaking of Enterludes, 't will make a man burst to heare him....
>
> Ibid., I, iii, 59-70

Matthew is a would-be poet who takes the purpose of poetry to be the writing of elaborate compliments for ladies. His taste in poetry is amply demonstrated by the speeches he remembers and pronounces for the benefit of Bobadill:

> Oh eyes, no eyes but fountaines fraught with teares.
> Oh life, no life, but lively forme of death. *
>
> Ibid., I, iii, 135-7

Thus Matthew proves to be not only a fool of fashion but also a foolish dabbler in poetry. As such he is an example of a kind of fool most obnoxious to Jonson, who insisted that a good poet must also be a good man: an instructor able to mix profit with pleasure.[15] Such a conception of the true poet leaves no room for the triflers who present toys for the amusement of bored ladies. In the end Matthew proves to be not even a poor poet but only a plagiarist without the taste to steal good bits of verse. It is Wellbred who advises the lady

* Jonson, a careful editor, normally places borrowings in quotation marks or italicizes them. Often, he italicizes introductions, prologues, et al. To save time and make reading easier, I will print such passages in normal type, reversing Jonson's use of italics. Henceforth, an asterisk will indicate such reversal.

[15] This idea will be discussed in full when considering Jonson's literary criticism.

Matthew serves:

> ... go to, rewarde his muse, you cannot
> give him lesse then a shilling, in conscience,
> for the booke he had it out of cost him a
> teston at the least...
>
> Ibid., III, iv, 125-8

We can see more of Matthew's taste in his stolen outpourings to Mrs. Bridget:

> Be not unkinde and fare, mishapen stuffe
> Is of behaviour boysterous and rough.
>
> And I in dutie will exceede all other,
> As you in bewtie doe excell loves mother.
>
> Ibid., III, iv, 66-7, 72-3*

Upon arriving in the city, Stephen falls in with Matthew and thinks to prove himself a poet also. Stephen can at least claim to be original, but his offerings are yet more puerile:

> Though fancie sleepe, my love is deepe.
> The deeper the sweeter, Ile be judg'd by Saint Peter.
>
> Ibid., II, i, 37-8,42 *

The scene which began with Matthew offering some specimens of poetry to Bobadill ends with Bobadill instructing Matthew how to accomodate the angry Downright in sword play. Matthew is captivated by the Captain's harangue and never doubts that mastering the terms of fencing is equivalent to mastering the skill itself.

Bobadill, for his part, is clearly a great dealer in words. Oaths he utters in swarms:

> Bodie of me... by Gods so... hang him Rooke...
> by S. George... by the life of Pharaoh... by
> heaven... by Phoebus...
>
> Ibid., I, iii, 109-229

Fencing, for him, is but a matter of using the right terms:

> Fie veney, most grosse denomination, as ever
> I heard: oh the stockado while you live
> Signior, note that.
> Ibid., I, iii, 218-19

The skill he professes with the blade is boundless:

> ... why ile learne you by the true judgement of the eye, hand and foot, to controll any mans point in the world; Should your adversary confront you with a pistoll, 'twere nothing, you should (by the same rule) controll the bullet, most certaine by Phoebus: unles it were haile-shot...
> Ibid., I, iii, 224-29

The encounter with Downright proves Matthew and Bobadill cowards. Their skill in terms and their boasts of vengeance to be wrought on Downright come to nothing as Matthew flees, and Bobadill refuses to fight, preferring to be cudgelled rather than risk a pass with the blades.[16] Jonson did not think cowardice a fault of gallants only, but it was a weakness he often castigated them for, and he certainly does so in the case of Matthew, Stephen and Bobadill.

The tendency of the gallant to master skills of no merit or difficulty is satirized in Stephen's desire to equal Bobadill's variety of oaths:

> So, I had as liefe as an angell I could sweare
> as well as that gentleman.
> II, iii, ll. 111-12

[16] Op. cit., IV, ii, ll. 96-131

Similarly, Matthew and Stephen wish to take tobacco as they think gentlemen should:

> Bobadill. It's your right Trinidado: did you never take any, signior?
> Stephen. No truly sir; but i'le learne to take it now, since you commend it so.
> . . .
> Matthew. By this ayre the most divine Tobacco as ever I drunke.
> III, ii, ll. 65-8, 125-6

The gallants spy a royal road to every objective and would not seek any objective without one. Noting that learned men command some esteem and perceiving that a man much given to thought is slow to respond, if he responds at all, to trivial diversions, they see merit in affecting a melancholy air. They think not merely to personate the thoughtful man but actually to become such by mimicking his external traits. Stephen and Matthew follow just this train of superficial logic:

> Stephen. I truely sir, I am mightily given to melancholy.
> Matthew. Oh Lord sir, it's your only best humor sir, your true melancholy, breedes your perfect fine wit sir: I am melancholie my selfe divers times sir, and then do I no more but take your pen and paper presently, and write you your halfe score or your dozen of sonnets at a sitting.
> . . .
> Stephen. Truely sir, and I love such things out of measure.
> . . .
> Matthew. Why I pray you signior, make use of my studie, it's at your service.
> Stephen. I thanke you sir, I shal be bolde I warrant you, have you a close stoole there?
> Ibid., II, iii, 76-88

An interesting example of the slight sharpening of meaning which occurs in some of the textual changes made in the Folio of 1616 is apparent in the last line of this passage. In the Folio the line reads:

> Stephen. ...have you a stoole there, to be melancholy' upon?
>
> _Ibid._, Folio, III, i, l. 100

The best that can be said of this sorry crew is that they are too insipid to commit any serious crime. Kitely expresses his fear:

> Why't cannot be, where there is such resort
> Of wanton gallants, and young revellers,
> That any woman should be honest long.
>
> _Ibid._, I, iv, ll. 161-3

Downright complains:

> ...hee's a gallant, a _Caveliero_ too, right hangman cut.
>
> _Ibid._, I, iv, ll. 133-4

But the gallants are not dangerous men; they are only ridiculous.

The persistence of Jonson's interest in social satire is attested by the fact that he introduced the topic in _Volpone_. The satire in the play is directed mainly upon greed, and the setting is literary rather than realistic. The Italian setting of Volpone is invested with a high degree of verisimiltude because of Jonson's ability to fuse a multitude of details gleaned from his Latin studies. The setting is vastly different from the native English Settings of the Folio version

of Every Man in His Humour and Cynthia's Revels. The characters as well, who can trace their literary descent back to Roman comedy and Roman satire, are not like the characters of Jonson's social satires. They are not completely stupid, nor are they foppish. Yet, into this sombre satire which explores degrees of human depravity not even hinted at in the social satires, Jonson introduced three characters who would be at home in any of his social satires. The connection of Sir Politique Would-Bee, Fine Madam Would-Bee and Peregrine with the main plot of Volpone is explained by the Oxford Editors:

> A breath of lighter and more wholesome air from the old Humour-comedies enters with this quaintly refreshing personage and his associates; and it is significant that Jonson recovers the normal temper of his comedy precisely where he turns from the Venetians of his erudite invention to the English of his familiar experience, the eccentrics whose humours were to be studied from the life in Fleet Street and Westminster. Sir Politick and his lady are, in truth, as alien to the spirit of the play as they appear to be to the usages of Venice: foreigners full of naive curiosity and enterprise, who thrust themselves into dangerous entanglement with an affair which they do not in the least comprehend and on which they have not the least effect. The peculiar humour of the picture depends in large part upon the contrast between their fussy and officious interference and their irrelevance; humour which was not to be had, if their absurd contortions had had any bearing upon, or inner relation to, the main theme. 17.

Strangely enough then, the function of Knight and Lady

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17. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 64

Would-Bee is comic diversion. Even though the main plot of Volpone is such mordant comedy as to require the lighter irrelevancies of the knight, the lady, and Peregrine, it is still true that Jonson had to select the precise type of character to supply the diversion. That an English knight, his wife, and an English traveller were selected is further evidence of Jonson's interest in social satire. While Peregrine is another witty young man like Edward Kno'well, the knight and lady are as foolish and presumptuous as any court creatures previously satirized.

Fine Madam Would-Bee owes many of her characteristics to Juvenal's representation of the literary lady in his Sixth Satire. Certainly Jonson's satire of some social types, even in such early plays as Every Man in His Humour, was influenced by his classical knowledge. But even should it be true that Jonson was first inclined towards social criticism by reading the ancients, the frequency with which he plies the theme and the variety of situations in which he develops it cannot be gainsaid. His persistent ridicule of social folly is proof of his interest; whether that interest was present prior to acquaintance with classical social satire can not be ascertained. It is only certain that out of his experience in the world of men and the world of books he developed a preoccupation with the faults of the social world, and in judging

these faults he referred to the standards which he applied in judging all the works of men.

2. A Contradiction in the Judgement of the Would-be Gallants

Returning to the comments gleaned from the Quarto version of Every Man in His Humour, dating from 1601, we have a well-defined estimation of the gallants which was to form the basis of all Jonson's subsequent social satire. Jonson criticized them for ignorance, cowardice, and laziness. Probing deeper into their characters, he suggested that their greed and lust prompted many of their dishonorable and foolish actions. Their laziness manifests itself in a limited ambition which aspires only to things which can be obtained with little effort. Their ignorance is revealed in their failure to appreciate what is truly great and good. Only shallow minds could be devoted completely to dress, manners, smoking, swearing, and boasting. Their cowardice may be an unsuspected blessing which keeps them from being dangerous. If it is true that Jonson has made the gallants of his plays more fatuous than any of the fashionable people of the time, it must be admitted that the exaggeration makes his opinion unmistakably clear.

This earliest estimation of the gallants agrees with

Jonson's later ideas except in one particular, and in that particular the earliest judgement was the better one. In Cynthia's Revels there is special emphasis on the pride of the gallants, and their ignorance combines with this pride to make them active opponents of scholars and learning. Their ridiculous pride is but a further development of the thirst for acclaim which made Stephen so much concerned with the appearance of his leg. Their ignorance, however, has changed rather than merely developed. They do not fail to understand what a learned man really is; they dislike and scorn learned men. The conflict of Cynthia's Revels centres in the bitterness of the fops towards Crites. There is no doubt that this presentation of a whole group of base courtiers bent on discrediting a scholar was Jonson's retort to the fashionable men who came to the theatre to be seen rather than to see or hear. The purpose of the conflict between Crites and the fops is not merely to expose the follies of certain social exercises but to show the superiority of Jonson's mode of life and interests to those of his detractors. The conflict is not then the expression of objective criticism but a strong personal reaction to criticism.

Let us first see how the gallants have changed from being stupid to being antagonistic towards scholars.

This antagonism is expressed in their own words:

> ...there's a retired scholler there (i.e. at court). you would not wish a thing to be better contemn'd of a society of gallants, then it is...[18]
>
> Asotus. ...I'le give out my aquaintance with all the best writers, to countenance me the more.
> Amorphus. Rather seeme not to know 'hem, it is your best.
>
> Cynthia's Revels, III, i, ll. 66-8
>
> Anaides. I, and he is a scholer besides. You may disgrace him here, with authoritie.
>
> ...
>
> This (i.e. courtship) is none of your seven, or nine beggarly sciences, but a certaine mysterie above 'hem. ...
>
> Ibid., V, iv, ll. 25-6, 542-3

The value of Crites in the face of these defamations is accentuated by aligning the supernatural characters with him, and, in the end, allowing him to earn the approval of Cynthia. The speeches of Crites are of two kinds: condemnations of specific faults in the court crawlers and assertions of our responsibility to make the most of our intellects. The first kind of speech is such a one as this:

> For, would any reasonable creature make these his serious studies, and perfections? Much lesse, onely live to these ends?
>
> Ibid., V, iv, ll. 174-7

18. This speech occurs in lines 86-88 of the Induction to Cynthia's Revels and is spoken by the third of three children who utter the Induction.

The second type of speech is such an exhortation as this:

> And, yet the zeale of every knowing man,
> ...
> Cannot but vent the *Aetna* of his fires,
> T'enflame best bosomes, with much worthier love
> Then of these outward, and effeminate shades:
> That, these vaine joyes, in which their wills consume
> Such powers of wit, and soule, as are of force
> To raise their beings to aeternitie,
> May be converted on workes, fitting men.
> And, for the practice of a forced looke,
> An antique gesture, or a fustian phrase,
> Studie the native frame of a true heart,
> An inward comelinesse of bountie, knowledge,
> And spirit, that may conforme them, actually,
> To *Gods* high figures, which they have in power:
> Which to neglect for a selfe-loving neatnesse,
> Is sacrilege, ~~and~~ of an unpardon'd greatnesse.
> *Ibid*., V, iv, ll. 631, 635-48

We must now question the accuracy of a presentation of the fops which makes them active enemies of a scholar, for we may justly suspect that personal resentment of an audience, which though well perfumed was not always savory to Jonson, was leading him so to present them. In the Induction to *Cynthia's Revels* there is extensive satire on the fashionable play-goer whose judgement is thus represented:

> As some one civet-wit among you, that knowes no other learning, then the price of satten and vellets; nor other perfection, then the wearing of a neat sute; and yet will censure as desperately as the most profess'd *critique* in the house: presuming, his clothes should beare him out in't. Another (whom it hath pleas'd nature to furnish with more beard, then braine) prunes his mustaccio, lisps, and (with some score of affected othes) sweares downe all that sit about him: *That the old Heironimo*, (as it was first acted) *was the onely*

> best, and judiciously pend play of Europe. A
> third great-bellied juggler talkes of twentie
> yeeres since, and when MONSIEUR was heere, and
> would enforce all wits to bee of that fashion,
> because his doublet is still so. A fourth
> miscals all by the name of fustian, that his
> grounded capacitie cannot aspire to.
> Ibid., Induction, 201-15

Not only does Jonson jeer at his fashionable auditors;* he admits that many of his plays met with sharp disapproval. Poetaster concludes with the confession and resolve:

> And, since the Comick MUSE
> Hath prov'd so ominous to me, I will trie
> If Tragoedie have a more kind aspect.
> Her favours in my next I will pursue,
> Where, if I prove the pleasure but of one,
> So he judicious be; He shall b' alone
> A Theatre unto me....
> ...
> There's something come into my thought,
> That must, and shall be sung, high, and aloofe,
> Safe from the wolves black jaw, and the dull
> asses hoofe.
> Poetaster, To the Reader, 222-8, 237-9

The first result of this determination to work in a new vein was Sejanus. In this play the Senecan concept of tragedy is followed as the rise and downfall of the favorite of the emperor Tiberius is described. Sejanus was no better received than the previous comedy. In the Dedication Jonson admits:

> It is a poeme, that (if I well remember) in your
> Lo. sight, suffer'd no lesse violence from our
> people here, then the subject of it did from the
> rage of the people of Rome.
> Sejanus, Dedication, 9-12

In this first extant tragedy by Jonson, the historical

* Since Jonson was fond of distinguishing between those who came to see and be seen and those who came to listen and understand, "auditors" is a fitting term to suggest his conception of a good audience.

interests of the author and his faith in an outmoded type of drama over-whelmed his practical knowledge of the theatre. One also sees the stubborn pride of Jonson here. Sejanus was written in despite of the taste of the time rather than in hope of pleasing it.

Considering then the rebuffs which Jonson's work had suffered in the theatres of London and the determination with which he held to his own ideas, the significance of the portrayal of the fops as enemies of learning becomes apparent. That Jonson had no scruples against deriding his critics in his plays is proved by the personal satire in Poetaster, which followed Cynthia's Revels on to the stage. It is most likely therefore, that the presentation of the gallants as enemies of scholarship is Jonson's answer to the group of well-clad playgoers who scorned his offerings. This alleged contempt of learning is not objective criticism, and it is not in accord with Jonson's other strictures against the would-be gallants. In Every Man in His Humor, Matthew resorts to plagiarism to secure reputation as a poet. Such a course is not followed by a man opposed to learning. Moreover, we have seen the gallants of this same play affecting a melancholy mood in hopes of becoming learned men. Here again is an attitude which indicates no opposition to learning.

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We must conclude that the earlier idea was the more truthful. The gallants lacked the ambition and perhaps the capacity to become learned men, so they sought to assume the appearance of learning. That they should censure rashly and talk glibly about the plays of their time is entirely consistent with the attempt to appear learned. But that they should become unequivocal opponents of a scholar simply because he was a scholar is not consistent. Crites is undeniably the representative of his creator. The bitterness of his dealings with the courtiers is the result of Jonson's bitterness at the reception accorded his work rather than the echo of a veritable antagonism toward learning on the part of the courtiers of the time.

3. The Satire in Cynthia's Revels

a. General Nature and Value.

As we are careful to see the personal aspects of the satire in Cynthia's Revels, let us also respect Jonson's sincere principles. His determined criticism of men who cultivated manners as an accomplishment rather than out of respect for others, his insistence upon judging men by their accomplishments rather than by their social rank or inheritance, and his abiding faith in the power of the mind are most praiseworthy. Crites

is not merely Jonson's answer to his critics: he is Jonson's conception of a good man. We may object that this intellectual champion is cold and stiff and only two dimensional in presentation, but he burns with the ambition and the intelligence that again and again raise Jonson's work from mere petulance to sound and shrewd criticism.

Pride was a weakness of the gallants which was displayed by Stephen in Every Man in His Humor, but the results of this weakness are far more exhaustively explored in Cynthia's Revels. Indeed, the subtitle of the play was The Fountain of Self-love. The effects of self-love are demonstrated by having the court-crawlers drink from the fountain of self-love and reporting their subsequent behaviour. Amorphus is the first to drink and is soon recounting his graces and accomplishments:

> If my behaviours had beene of a cheape or
> customarie garbe; my accent, or phrase vulgar;
> my garments trite; my countenance illiterate ...
> Cynthia's Revels, I, iii, 24-7

The other courtiers, like Amorphus, pride themselves on their manners, physical features, and clothes. Frantic pride combines with stupidity to lead these creatures into inane pastimes and foolish excesses. With the zeal of collegians striving for athletic letters, they seek to demonstrate their social skills. Paying court to a lady is not for them a prelude to marriage or even to friend-

ship, but merely an occasion for the display of assiduously cultivated manners and methods. So vainly desperate for acclaim are these people that any fatuity in which they can show proficiency is eagerly taken up. This thirst for esteem is unchecked by any vestige of common sense so that the courtiers will happily part with small fortunes for the honor of procuring some sign of recognition from a lady. In the third scene of the fourth act Asotus bestows a diamond, a pearl necklace, an unnamed jewel, and some pendants upon Philautia and Phantaste in return for a glove and the promise of a garter. Such lunacy is doubtless an exaggeration, or perhaps a euphemism. Jonson may have hesitated to specify the exact nature of the favors that could command such largesse. Or again, we may suspect that this extravagant behaviour was suggested to Jonson by his knowledge of the extravagances of epicurean Rome. But whatever heightening touches he has added or slight alterations he has made, these fopperies remain as exaggerations rather than fabrications. If pride and stupidity are raised to the highest power in Cynthia's Revels, it is yet true that the indictment brought against the court-crawlers is clear. The opinions so clearly expressed were consistently held throughout his career.

The fundamental accuracy of his judgement is best

shown by noting how the same charges can be brought against the fashionable society of any period. The modern grand dame's pride in the singularity of her appearance still assures couturiers of exorbitant prices for exclusive designs. The ten best dressed women in the world claim the front pages of many newspapers. The nouveau riche today seek to impress society with lavish entertaining. Jonson's strictures against bad taste and bad conduct would have been no less harsh had some inhabitants of Hollywood been his targets. He argued a timeless cause, and it is to his credit that for the most part he argued it honestly and on many occasions with brilliant and savage wit.

In addition to noting that the satire of the gallants is sometimes motivated by personal pique, we must make one further qualification of the value of his social satire. Merely to remark the foolish excesses of pleasure-bent humanity is not an act of genius. It does not require the wisdom of a philosopher to discern that the color of a woman's hair or the size of her bust have no bearing on her mentality, however much the newspapers may display or quote her. Similarly, Jonson was not the only man of his time to despise foppery. However, severe critics of society have sometimes surrendered to the lure of the very follies they attacked when the opportunity to participate was afforded them. We may therefore re-

member to Jonson's credit that the favor of a sovereign and many days spent at court and in the houses of the great never weakened his resolution. But respect for his dogged opposition to social fatuities must never blind us to the fact that this opposition was neither new nor inspired. A play devoted entirely to ridiculing the foibles of polite society may be amusing and stimulating, but it lacks the depth and emotion of Hamlet or The Return of the Native, or even The Sound and the Fury. Skilful plotting and witty sarcasm are generally more important than analysis and insight in Jonson's plays. His best work is in the front rank of English dramatic technique and is excellent comedy, but we have not yet discussed his best plays. Every Man in His Humour is entertaining and very promising; it is not great. Cynthia's Revels is more often vicious than funny as Jonson becomes so engrossed in castigating his whipping boys that the dramatic action halts and staggers under an intolerable burden of satire.

b. The Woman of Fashion

It is in Cynthia's Revels that the woman of fashion is first presented as a distinct social type deserving of ridicule. The foolish court ladies, Philautia, Phantaste, and Moria, display the same basic faults as the would-be gallants. Mercury thus sums up the charac-

ter of Anadies:

> ...he has two essentiall parts of the courtier,
> pride, and ignorance....
> Cynthia's Revels, II, ii, 77-8

His words are also an apt description of the court ladies.

The foolish pride of the ladies is apparent in their vain concern with the singularity of their attire:

> Philautia. What! have you chang'd your
> head-tire?
> Phantaste. Yes faith, th' other was so
> neere the common: it had no extraordinary
> grace; besides, I had worne it almost a day,
> in good troth.
> Ibid., II, iv, 64-8

Like the men, they struggle to be witty, but their shallow minds only attain to dullness. Hedon boasts to Anaides:

> ...I have devisde one or two of the prettiest
> othes (this morning in my bed) as ever thou
> heard'st....
> Ibid., II, ii, 11-12

One of the oaths which tickles his pride is:

> By the white valley that lies betweene the
> Alpine hils of your bosome, I protest.... *
> Ibid., II, ii, 23-4

Hedon then recites some pieces of conversation he plans to use in asking a kiss of his lady. This prepared speech is eventually ruined by Crites, and although we never learn the ladies' reactions to it, we do have evidence that they take pride in bandying similarly insipid quips with the gallants, for Philautia asks Moria:

> Faith, how lik'd you my quippe to HEDON,
> about the garter? was't not witty?
> Ibid., II, iv, 48-9

There is no characteristic which is peculiar to the ladies, for even their extensive use of cosmetics has its counterpart in the perfumes and powders of the men. However, Jonson's interest in cosmetics is somewhat akin to his interest in alchemy, for in treating either subject he makes detailed references to the ingredients and the methods of preparation.

There is no very detailed discussion of cosmetics in *Cynthia's Revels*, but Wittipol's discourse abounds with lists of ingredients and processes of blending as intricate as the jargon of an alchemist:

> Your *Allum Scagliola*, or *Pol di pedra*;
> And *Zuccarino*; *Turpentine of Abezzo*,
> Wash'd in nine waters: *Soda di levante*
> Or your *Ferne* ashes; *Benjamin di gotta*;
> *Grasso di serpe*; *Porcelletto marino*;
> Oyles of *Lentisco*; *Zucche Mugia*; make
> The admirable *Vernish* for the face,
> Gives the right luster; but two drops rub'd on
> With a piece of scarlet, makes a *Lady* of sixty
> Looke at sixteene. But, above all, the water
> Of the white *Hen*, of the *Lady Estifanias*!
> *The Devil is an Ass*, IV, iv, 30-40

The passage quoted is but a portion of Wittipol's discourse on Spanish cosmetics, but it shows Jonson's curiously minute interest. Jonson's knowledge of the technicalities of cosmetics was the result of his wide reading and some of this knowledge was culled from ancient writers. Jonson's unusual interest in cosmetics is attested by the inclusion of detailed references to the beauty aids of fashionable ladies in both his Roman plays.

Eudemus, the physician, takes some pains to advise

Livia concerning the fucus, oil, dentifrice, pomatum, and perfume he has prepared for her, and he explains how his concoctions will afford protection against the wind and sun.[19] Fulvia and Galla discuss the importance of cosmetics to certain ladies and briefly question the merits of a dentifrice.[20] Jonson's distaste for ladies who strive to offset the ravages of age with cosmetics is expressed in Sejanus' expostulation with Eudemus:

> I do not aske...
> Which lady sleepes with her own face, a night?
> Which puts her teeth off, with her clothes, in court?
> Or, which her hayre? which her complexion?
> And, in which boxe she puts it?
>
> Sejanus, I, 304, 307-10

The extensive use of cosmetics is common to all the fashionable ladies of Jonson's plays, and the elaborate discussion of their preparation and use leaves no doubt that Jonson loathed the practice. The most notable reference to cosmetics in Cynthia's Revels is a passage, almost identical to the above lines from Sejanus, in which Moria tells what she would like to know if she were a "wise woman".[21]

The sex mores of the woman of fashion are severely

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19. Sejanus, II, 78-81, 125-31
20. Catiline, II, 60-5, 146-9
21. Cynthia's Revels, IV, i, 144-9 Herford and Simpson (Op. cit., vol. IX, p. 513) trace the passage to an epigram of Martial.

criticized, beginning with a sharp attack in Cynthia's Revels. This attack also occurs in the passage containing Moria's revelation of the secrets she would learn if she were a "wise woman". The habits of the ladies and gallants are clearly set forth:

> There should not a Nymph, or a widdow be got with childe i' the verge, but I would guesse (within one or two,) who was the right father: and in what moneth it was gotten; with what words; and which way. I would tell you, which Madame lov'd a Monsieur, which a player, which a page; who slept with her husband, who with her friend, who with her gentleman-usher, who with her horse-keeper, who with her monkie, and who with all.
>
> Cynthia's Revels, IV, i, 149-56

Fulvia, in Catiline, is represented as a whore. After Cicero has heard her relate the plans of the conspirators he exclaims:

> O Rome, in what a sicknesse art thou fall'n!
> ...
> ...that the first symptomes
> Of such a maladie, should not rise out
> From any worthy member, but a base
> And common strumpet....
>
> Catiline, III, 448-51

The pride of the would-be great ladies is again evident in the rivalry of Fulvia and Sempronia.[22]

Two other sweeping condemnations of the sexual conduct of the court creatures are offered in The Devil is an Ass and Poetaster. The conversation of Lady Taile-Bush and Lady Either-Side is concise and emphatic:

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22. Catiline, III, 375-9

> Either-Side. I doe not like it.
> I like our owne much better. Taile-Bush. 'Tis
> more French,
> And Courtly ours. Either-Side. And tasts more
> liberty.
> We may have our doozen of visiters, at once,
> Make love t(o) 'us. Taile-Bush. And before
> our husbands. Either-Side. Husband?
> As I am honest, Tayle-bush, I doe thinke
> If no body should love mee, but my poor husband,
> I should e'(e)n hang my selfe.
> The Devil is an Ass, IV, iv, 91-8

In Poetaster, Chloe is much relieved to learn that at the opportune moment her husband will be shut out of the way so as not to impede her relations with the courtiers.[23.] The policy of excluding husbands from court is first announced in Cynthia's Revels.[24.] It is interesting that the scenes which emphasize the sexual improprieties of the base courtlings stress the misconduct of the women much more than the immorality of the men. Fulvia, Lady Either-Side, and Lady Taile-Bush, for example, are represented as licentious in speech and character, and, in the presentation of Fulvia, there is no doubt that her actions are equal to her boasts. The only men in Jonson's plays who equal the conduct of the women are Epicure Mammon and Catiline. But neither of them is a typical gallant, so they do not obviate the assertion that Jonson charges the ladies of fashion, rather than the gallants, with sexual offenses. Quite likely, Jonson was influenced

23. Poetaster, IV, ii, 53-61
24. Cynthia's Revels, V, iii, 41-5

by the "double standard" which has long offered man more freedom than his mate.

It was noted earlier that the fashionable women in Cynthia's Revels prided themselves on their witty conversation. The fashionable women of later plays try to exceed this minor endeavour by affecting a knowledge of literature. The most notable "literary lady" is Fine Madam Would-Bee. She declares herself a connoisseur of all the arts in boasting to Volpone:

> I'am all for musique: save, i' the fore-noones,
> An houre, or two, for painting. I would have
> A lady, indeed, t'have all, letters, and artes,
> Be able to discourse, to write, to paint....
> Volpone, III, iv, 68-71

Some of her subsequent patter is borrowed from the literary lady in Juvenal's Sixth Satire,[25] but Jonson's contempt for the vacuous dilettante, first noted in the description of Matthew, burns with the fervor of sincere conviction. Lady Would-Bee is also a desperately proud woman who can not bear the thought of having anyone overreach her. When Volpone invents a dream and relates it, as a hint that he does not wish to see her, Would-Bee quickly invents a dream of her own so that she can again lead the conversation. Her actions are the epitome of tasteless affectation. Sempronia pretends some learning, but she is no match for Madam Would-Bee. That it was not so convenient to work a detailed satire of a dilettante

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[25] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 715

into a tragedy as it was to work such a satire into a comedy explains the superiority of Lady Would-Bee as a caricature of the literary lady.

Fine Madam Would-Bee is the most interesting of all the satirized women in Jonson's plays. Because she is a highly individualized character, she has some traits not often associated with the fashionable women of the plays, but these traits are entirely consistent with her more common characteristics. She is, for example, very jealous of her husband, and Mosca relieves Volpone of her attentions by telling her that he has seen Sir Politique:

> Rowing upon the water in a gondole,
> With the most cunning curtizan, of Venice.
> Volpone, III, v, 19-20

It is Would-Bee's jealous rage which makes her testify against Celia.[26]

More in common with the usual characteristics of the woman of fashion is the Lady's treatment of her servants:

> Lady Would-Bee. Come neerer: is this curle
> In his right place? or this? why is this higher
> Then all the rest? you ha' not wash'd your
> eies, yet?
> Or do they not stand even i' your head?
> Where's your fellow? call her. Nano. Now,
> St. MARKE
> Deliver us: anon, shee'll beate her women,
> Because her nose is red.
> Volpone, III, iv, 10-16

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26. Volpone, IV, vi, 1-14

This contemptuous attitude bears the stamp of ignorant pride and is a common attitude with the gallants as well as the ladies. It is not only servants, but tradesmen, and even former friends who have not adopted courtly habits who are to be despised. Thus Meer-craft and Ingine advise Fitz-dottrel:

> Meer-craft. You must doe nothing
> As you ha' done it heretofore; not know,
> Or salute any man. Ingine. That was your bed-fellow,
> The other moneth. Meer-craft. The other moneth? the weeke.
> The Devil is an Ass, II, viii, 7-10

Mercury's description of Hedon fits the type of man Meer-craft and Ingine are persuading Fitz-dottrel to become:

> He beates a tailour very well, but a stocking-seller admirably: and so consequently any one hee owes monie too, that dares not resist him.
> Cynthia's Revels, II, i, 51-3

The follies of the women of fashion and the gallants can be illustrated with exhaustive variety in the plays of Jonson, but all these follies reflect the basic faults of pride, ignorance, and selfishness. Pride and ignorance are the most obvious causes of their fatuity, but selfishness in the extreme is the only fault which could make them so contemptuous of the rights of others. The woman of fashion and the gallant differ only in gender.

4. The Degradation of Noble Traditions

Jonson's anger at the degradation of noble traditions is akin to his general belief that the base courtiers were vain fools devoted to trivial pursuits. His anger is first apparent in The Case is Altered. In later plays he utters a more urgent and detailed protest. This protest was based on the belief that honors, such as knighthoods, were no longer bestowed upon men who had performed worthy services. They had become emblems, to be had for a price, which might add to the social standings of their purchasers. There is a connection between his anger at the casual disposal of undeserved honors and titles and his insistence upon accomplishment as the measure of a man's worth. As he refused to believe that inheriting a fine estate or a comfortable portion automatically made one a gentleman, so he refused to believe that merely purchasing a coat of arms created a noble house. Particularly in Every Man out of His Humour is the ease with which coats of arms could be obtained ridiculed. Sogliardo, "an essentiall Clowne"[27], who aspires to be a gentleman, complains:

> ...Ile keepe men, and I keepe any; and Ile give coats, that's my humour: but I lacke a cullisen (i.e. an emblem to be worn by his servants).
> — Every Man out of His Humour, I, ii, 143-5

Buffone, "a scurrilous, and prophane Jester"[28], replies:

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[27] Every Man out of His Humour, Induction, 78
[28] Loc. cit., 25

> Why, now you ride to the citie, you may buy
> one, Ile bring you where you shall ha' your
> choise for money.
> ...
> O, I: You shall have one take measure of you,
> and make you a Coat of armes, to fit you of
> what fashion you will.
>
> *Ibid.*, I, ii, 146-7, 149-51

Jonson's attitude is summarized in a speech he gave to Tiberius:

> Let their great titles find increase by them,
> Not they by titles.
>
> *Sejanus*, III, 84-5

The Oxford Editors compare this statement to a passage from Claudian,[29.] while Jonson cites the Latin passage as a source when he writes in *The Haddington Masque*:

> ...by that act, to his name did bring
> The honor, to be Saver of his King.
>
> ll. 229-30

Whatever the language debt to Claudian, the attitude is sincerely held by Jonson.

Concentrating on a particular abuse of noble customs, Jonson protested against the degradation of knighthood. That the poet resented the cheapening of knighthood all through his life is confirmed by his persistence in introducing foolish, vain, and cowardly knights into many of his plays. The list of scorned knights begins with Politique Would-Bee in *Volpone*, continues with John Daw and La-Foole in *Epicoene*, Poule Either-Side in *The Devil is an Ass*, and Glorious Tiptoe in *The New Inn*, and ends with Diaphanous Silkworm in *The Magnetic Lady*.

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29. Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IX, 612

Epicure Mammon is no credit to knighthood, but he is not so thoroughly ridiculous as the six listed above. Petronell Flash in Eastward Ho! is another worthless fellow, but as Jonson was not the sole author of this play, and as the contributions of Chapman and Marston are numerous, I prefer not to depend on reference to the play in defending any point. As well as caricaturing knights, Jonson offered some direct comments. Abel Drugger, for example, despairs of marrying the wealthy widow because:

> ...shee'll never marry
> Under a knight.
> The Alchemist, II, vi, 50-1

Face tries to raise his spirits:

> What, and dost thou despaire, my little NAB,
> Knowing, what the Doctor has set downe for thee,
> And, seeing so many, o' the citie, dub'd?
> One glasse o' thy water, with a Madame, I know,
> Will have it done, NAB.
> Loc. cit., 50-6

Epicure Mammon, dreaming of the wealth Subtle will give him, declares that when his cook has served him exotic meat "drest with an exquisite, and poynant sauce":

> ...Ile say unto my cooke, there's gold,
> Goe forth, and be a knight.
> Ibid., II, ii, 86-7

The same idea is expressed in The Staple of News when Madrigall sings the Saraband he has composed for Pecunia:

> She makes good cheare, she keepes full boards,
> She holds a Fair of Knights, and Lords,

> A Mercat of all Offices....
> *The Staple of News*, IV, ii, 109-11

Another way of cheapening knighthood is disclosed in La-Foole's admission that a certain Lord Lofty:

> ...got mee knighted in Ireland....
> *Epicoene*, I, iv, 59-60

The Oxford Editors note that the statement implies:

> ...a backstairs approach to the title. Essex had made Irish knighthoods cheap.[30]

Morose also complains that knighthoods have been degraded to worthlessness.[31]

Jonson also regretted the debasement of other noble institutions. In *The New Inn*, for example, there is a discussion between the Host and Lovel in which they argue the merits of the custom of assigning boys as pages in order to train them. The Host protests he would hate to see his boy made a page. He would rather kill him:

> Then dam him to that desperate course of life.
> Lovel. Call you that desperate, which by a line
> Of institution, from our Ancestors,
> Hath beene deriv'd down to us, and receiv'd
> In a succession, for the noblest way
> Of breeding up our youth, in letters, armes,
> Faire meine, discourses, civill exercise,
> And all the blazon of a Gentleman?
> Where can he learne to vaulte, to ride, to fence,
> To move his body gracefuller? to speake
> His language purer? or to tune his minde,
> Or manners, more to the harmony of Nature
> Then, in these nourceries of nobility?--
> Host. I that was, when the nourceries selfe,

---

30. Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 12-13
31. *Epicoene*, II, v, 98-131

was noble,
And only vertue made it, not the mercate,
That titles were not vented at the drum,
Or common out-cry; goodnesse gave the greatness,
And greatnesse worship: Every house became
An Academy of honour, and those parts--
We see departed, in the practise, now,
Quite from the institution. Lovel. Why doe
you say so?
Or thinke so enviously? doe they not still
Learne there, the Centaures skill, the art of Thrace,
To ride? or Pollux mystery, to fence?
The Pyrrhick gestures, both to dance and spring
In armour, to be active for the Warres?
To study figures, numbers, and proportions,
May yeeld 'hem great in counsels, and the arts
Grave Nestor, and the wise Ulysses practis'd?
To make their English sweet upon their tongue!
As rev'rend Chaucer sayes? Host. Sir you mistake,
To play Sir Pandarus my copy hath it,
And carry messages to Madam Cresside.
Instead of backing the brave Steed, o' mornings,
To mount the Chambermaid; and for a leape
O'the vaulting horse, to ply the vaulting house:
For exercise of armes, a bale of dice,
Or two or three packs of cards, to shew the cheat,
And nimblenesse of hand: mistake a cloake
From my Lords back, and pawne it. Ease his pockets
Of a superfluous Watch; or geld a jewell
Of an odde stone, or so. Twinge three or foure
buttons
From off my Ladyes gowne. These are the arts,
Or seven liberall deadly sciences
Of Pagery, or rather Paganisme,
As the tides run. To which, if he apply him,
He may, perhaps, take a degree at Tiburne,
A yeare the earlier: come to read a lecture
Upon Aquinas at S. Thomas a Waterings,
And so goe forth a Laureat in hempe circle!
The New Inn, I, iii, 39-88

The passage shows that Jonson followed the Athenian ideal in education as well as demonstrating his conviction that there had been a change for the worse in some things. Truly, he brought a general charge against the court fops and vain ladies, alleging that their conduct and their activities disgraced worthy and well-founded

institutions. These people degraded noble titles and practices because they were incapable of understanding that the titles lost their value if the means of acquiring them were questionable. These people, Jonson would say, were unable to see beyond the mere name to the meaning and purpose of a title. Just as they made a sham of knighthood, the base courtiers contaminated everything they touched.

Academic degrees were not beyond the corroding touch of the courtlings, and in The Staple of News Peniboy Junior asserts:

> ...hee's my Barber Thom,
> A pretty Scholler, and a Master of Arts,
> Was made, or went out Master of Arts in a throng,
> At the Universitie....
> The Staple of News, I, v, 124-7

The Oxford Editors provide this note on the passage:

> When James I visited Oxford in state in 1605, degrees were lavishly conferred on his retinue on 30 August. 'These Noblemen & diverse Knights were admitted in Scarlet Gowns and Hoods, & so were diverse after them, while they came but slowly. Afterwards they pressed in so thick, that the Register being there, with penn & Inck in his hand, could not take yr names, neither did he or any man else aske, what they were, so they looked like gentlemen, & had gotten on a gown & a Hood, they were admitted' (account by an eyewitness in Harley MS. 7044, f. 105b).... Bishop Corbet says the same thing happened at Cambridge when the King visited there on 12 March 1615.
> 32.

From first to last Jonson was convinced that greed

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32. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. X, 266

was mainly responsible for the alteration of traditional values. In _The Case is Altered_ he first suggested that bumpkins could aspire to social prominence if they had money. Much later this idea became more elaborate and was more carefully expressed. Peniboy Canter protests against Cymbal's extravagant praise of Pecunia:

> Why, that's the end of wealth! thrust riches outward,
> And remaine beggers within: contemplate nothing
> But the vile sordid things of time, place, money,
> And let the noble, and the precious goe,
> Vertue and honesty; hang 'hem; poore thinne membranes
> Of honour; who respects them? O, the _Fates_!
> How hath all just, true reputation fall'n,
> Since money, this base money 'gan to have any!
> _The Staple of News_, III, ii, 241-8

This outburst has special significance because it embodies ideas which were more fully expressed in _Discoveries_:

> _Money_ never made any man rich, but his mind,
> He that can order him selfe to the Law of nature,
> is not onely without the sense, but the feare
> of poverty. O! but to strike blind the people
> with our wealth, and pompe, is the thing!
> _Discoveries_, 1373-6 [33]

The idea is traced to Seneca by the Oxford Editors,[34] but Jonson's use of it in two places, with considerable elaboration in one instance, shows that he took it to heart.

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[33] Cf. _Discoveries_, 1376-80, 1437-54

[34] Herford and Simpson, _Op. cit._, Vol. XI, 254, 255

C. The Conflict of Reason and Emotion.

In beginning this survey of Jonson's protests against the free and easy dispensing of titles and honors it was noted that his objections were related to his insistence upon respecting men for their own accomplishments. It is also true that these protests are connected with his faith in the power and value of a well-trained mind. The throng of the king's retainers eagerly scrambling for degrees is a perfect example of men seeking to add to their prestige without really understanding how prestige is gained. These men, not appreciating the obligations which a degree holder must be able to undertake nor the abilities he must possess, would not realize that if a number of worthless men are given a degree then the degree becomes worthless. Some of them, we may fear, would really think that securing a degree by any means did make them the equals of all other holders of the degree. A man must be intelligent enough to distinguish mere names and outward appearances from worthy efforts and important deeds before he can have a true conception of any title or honor. This understanding of the basis of honor ultimately produces a respect for the noble accomplishments themselves rather than respect for the tokens of honor gained by such accomplishments. Such an attitude is obvious in the following quotations:

> Arruntius: It is a note
> Of upstart greatnesse, to observe, and watch
> For these poor trifles (i.e. salutes), which the noble mind
> Neglects, and scornes.
>
> Sejanus, V, ll. 464-7

> Catulus. He wants no state, or honors, that hath vertue.
>
> Catiline, III, l. 148

> Fulvia. 'Twas vertue onely, at first, made all men noble.
>
> Catiline, II, l. 127

Consistent emphasis on the reasons underlying an accolade may result in de-emphasizing, or perhaps even ignoring, the accolade. Such a shift in emphasis is clearly evident in the preceding passages, and it is a further example of Jonson's arguing for a judgement of human worth that respected the individual's thoughts and works rather than the circumstances of his birth. He liked to think that titles and honors, whether acquired or inherited, were much less important than the actions of the man himself.

It is easy to see a contradiction entering here. If Jonson really believed that what people actually did was more important than the recognition they were given, why should he so vehemently have resisted any diminution in the significance of such recognition? It is not enough to say he felt that any significance attaching to tokens of recognition was worth preserving. It must be admitted that Jonson could see the logic of an answer he

did not really take to heart. He was not merely a scholar who observed, read, reasoned, and concluded. He was also a man who could be furiously angry and desperately loyal, and his reason could not always rule his passions. The picture of a deserving subject receiving decorations from the hands of a wise and generous ruler appealed to him. His analysis of the nature of honor could not blot out the charm of such a scene. The conflict between his discerning intellect and his fervent emotions must be kept in mind if we are to do justice to his critical comments. The best example of this conflict occurred during the "stage quarrel" and though it concerns literary rather than social criticism a temporary change of subject is justified for the purpose of showing the full effects of the struggle between passion and reason.

The "stage quarrel" was basically a dispute between Marston and Dekker on one side and Jonson on the other. Poetaster was Jonson's final effort in the quarrel and is filled with interesting outbursts. Jonson thought that he was a writer of much greater stature than Marston or Dekker, and even after allowing for a good deal of prejudice, we must agree with him. He certainly had the best of them in scholarship and classical background. In writing Poetaster he identified himself with Horace while Marston and Dekker were represented in the

persons of Crispinius and Demetrius respectively. The full names of these characters, as worked out by Jonson, leave no doubt of his estimation of them. Rufus Laberius Crispinius was given the first name, Rufus, because of his red hair. Laberius was a Roman writer of mimes censured by Aulus Gellius for his "too obscure and despicable words", while Crispinius was a bad and voluminous poet who challenged Horace to see which of them could write faster.[35] Demetrius Fannius is a combination of the names of two men referred to by Horace. Demetrius was a musician he called a monkey, and Fannius he described as a feeble poet.[36] Thus we have the picture of the great Horace, favored by Augustus and Maecenas, beset by a pair of insignificant carpers. Jonson entertained the idea that a great writer had no need to answer the detractions of his inferiors. He proclaimed that a great author could rest secure in his fame and ignore the fulminations of waspish enemies. He writes in the introduction to the Apologetical Dialogue appended to Poetaster:

> For, in these strifes, and on such persons, were as wretched to affect a victorie, as it is unhappy to be committed with them.
>
> 9-11

In the Apologetical Dialogue itself he writes:

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[35] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 535
[36] Herford and Simpson, Loc. cit., p. 536

> It is the happiest thing, this not to be
> Within the reach of malice; It provides
> A man so well, to laugh of injuries.
>
> 28-30

He goes on to ridicule the suggestion that one must fear the allegations of inferior persons because such allegations may be believed by the multitude.

> 'Lasse, good rout!
> I can affoord them leave, to erre so still:
> And, like the barking students of Beares-Colledge,
> To swallow up the garbadge of the time
> With greedy gullets, whilst my selfe sit by,
> Pleas'd, and yet tortur'd, with their beastly feeding.
> 'Tis a sweet madnesse runnes along with them,
> To thinke, all that are aym'd at, still are strooke.
>
> 43-50

And yet he had to write Poetaster. With perfect logic he demonstrated that great and good men need not fear slanders or trouble to answer them, but his logic could not master his passions. He could not calmly bear the taunts and jibes; he had to strike back.

He realized that his pronouncements could not be reconciled with his actions and tried to explain:

> ...three years,
> They did provoke me with their petulant stiles
> On every stage: and I at last, unwilling,
> But weary, I confesse, of so much trouble,
> Thought, I would try, if shame could winne upon 'hem.
>
> Apologetical Dialogue, ll. 96-100

If he believed his previous arguments, why was he weary? or troubled? These terms "weary" and "troubled" are vague. We can expect vagueness because no specific argument can reconcile Jonson's theory of the assured

indifference of great writers with his decision to strike back--unless we are prepared to refute his claim to greatness. In this divergence of theory and practice we have the best example of the conflict between Jonson's reasoned conclusions and his turbulent feelings.

Esther Cloudmann Dunn presents an interesting description of the effect of contemporary conditions on Jonson's work. She generally tends to minimize the distortions and exaggerations to which Jonson resorted in the "stage quarrel" and other disputes. Also, she tends to play down his emotional nature and would present him as a detached and impartial observer. Nonetheless, she cannot entirely ignore Jonson's powerful feelings, and is obliged to offer a cautious understatement:

> Thus it follows that there is a feeling, unconsciously or consciously realized by the other playwrights, that Jonson's artistic doctrine was not quite impersonal, not merely a matter of conviction, but also in part an expression of his peculiar temperament. 37.

D. Conclusions

To this point we have noted one inconsistency in Jonson's critical opinions, we have stressed the important contradiction between his thoughts and feelings on some

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37. Dunn, E. C., Ben Jonson's Art, Northampton, Mass., 1925, p. 57

subjects, and we have discussed his criticism of the higher levels of society. Some conclusions regarding his standards of judgement have also been reached, and it is worth restating these standards because they apply in every instance where he undertook extensive criticism of a subject.

He judged men by the degree of intelligence manifested in their conduct and by the extent of their accomplishments.

The satirical import of his finest plays rests on these two criteria. Dapper, Drugger, and Sir Epicure Mammon are practised on by Subtle, Face, and Doll precisely because their greedy appetites are not restrained or directed by intelligence or respect for the great and good things of life.

Even such cunning men as Mosca and Volpone are led to destruction when their appetites outrun their discretion. Volpone, not content with gulling three greedy old men, overreaches himself in plotting to possess Celia. Mosca is ruined when he sees the opportunity of taking most or all of his master's fortune and betrays Volpone. Mosca fails because his greed pushes him too far, and Volpone gives the entire plot away rather than see his servant claim all his wealth. It is not mere foolishness which leads Volpone and Mosca to failure, for they are shrewd men. Sexual desire and greed, however,

prompt them to attempt schemes which their colder judgement would balk at.

Going deeper into Jonson's criticism we thus find him suggesting that it is not only lack of intelligence which limits men's accomplishments, but the failure to restrain their greed and lust. In his first play, The Case is Altered, Jonson suggested greed and lust as causes of false friendship. Throughout his life he continued to view these appetites as snares for unwary or weak-willed men. The courtiers appear stupid and accomplish little because they are the slaves of their greed and lust.

Another fault which Jonson believed restricted men's accomplishments, or made them appear stupid, is pride. As indicated in Cynthia's Revels, it is the overweening pride of the courtiers which drives them to attempt diverse fopperies. Because they can not bear to be judged incompetent, the ladies and gentlemen will not dare anything difficult lest they should fail. They devote themselves to trivialities and soothe their pride by mastering the mediocre.

Greed, lust, and pride are therefore, the basic faults which prevent the fops from measuring up to the standards of intelligence and accomplishment which Jonson applied to all humans.

Going beyond the analyses of the courtiers and

women of fashion, Jonson considered the effects of their fatuous conduct. His contention that the conduct of the fops degraded noble customs, for example, rests on the assumption that the greed of these people, and their inane thirst for honor and acclaim lead them to misunderstand the basis of honor. Their stupidly selfish sense of values makes the guerdons they gain so easily worthless in the eyes of all sensible people.

Jonson's social criticism is, for the most part, consistent and logical. His bitter condemnation of people who focused their attention on trivialities rather than risk failure in greater attempts has significance for our age with its increasing value on conformity and averages.

The only inconsistency in his social criticism arises from his anger. His attempt, in Cynthia's Revels, to represent the fops as enemies of learning is not consistent with the earlier suggestion that the fops would affect an air of learning and prided themselves on acting like scholarly men. Further study of Jonson's criticism will bear out the assumption that bursts of temper caused the most serious lapses of the poet's critical integrity. We will also see that he was not entirely free from the faults he found in others, and his pride, in particular, caused some inconsistencies in his criticism.

II

LITERARY CRITICISM

A. Language

1. The Rational Analysis of Language

Tucker Brooke thus explains the greatness of Jonson:

> For him poetry was the criticism of life, and criticism could be no easy thing for author or for reader:
>
> For though the Poet's matter Nature be,
> His art doth give the fashion; and that he,
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> .... and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muses' anvil.[1]

Brooke also insists:

> ...Jonson is The Poet, the norm and center for the measurement of his fellows. He is so normal that, apart from the outstanding lyrics and plays, we do not easily recognize his greatness; but the greatness is in almost every line he wrote.[2]

The importance of these statements is that they stress two important qualities of Jonson's work. The first statement emphasizes that Jonson conceived the poet to have the responsibility of seeing life clearly, understanding it, and using his knowledge to instruct other

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1. Baugh, Brooke, Chew, Malone, and Sherburn: A Literary History of England; Appleton-Century-Crofts; New York; 1948; p. 628

2. Ibid., p. 627

men. The second statement emphasizes Jonson's intellectualism. If he is "the norm and center for the measurement of his fellows", it is because his keen mind, steeped in classical precedent, examined every line he wrote and prevented him from indulging in extravagance or descending to doggerel. That Jonson's poetry is shaped by rationalism rather than emotionalism has important effects on his attitude towards other writers. When he criticized other men's work, rather than merely abusing it, his criticism was founded on careful study of their language. He weighed their choice of words against the meaning to be expressed and the situation in which it was to be displayed. Frequently, such weighing of words left him oblivious to more subjective questions of mood and feeling.

To view the poet as a man dedicated to high purposes and to base literary criticism on the analysis of language are ideas of the mature Jonson. How soon did he arrive at these ideas, and how consistently did he apply them?

To know Jonson at all is to know that literary criticism was one of his first interests, and this interest in criticism began with the study of language. His earliest extant play, The Case is Altered, was retouched within four years of its composition purely for

the purpose of satirizing the work of Anthony Munday. In the same play there seems to be some satire upon the language used by Gabriel Harvey, although the Oxford Editors express some reservations about such an interpretation:

> In a series of articles contributed to *Notes and Queries* from March to November 1903, H.C. Hart pointed to Gabriel Harvey as Juniper's special model. But the parallels are not complete, though it is not unlikely that Jonson used Harvey among other sources. If so, the satire is general and not unlike Clove's vacuous use of Marston's words in *Every Man out of his Humour*, III. iv. [3]

The last part of this note is a significant statement:

> From the first Jonson showed a marked interest in the study of words and style. Bobadill's fencing jargon and Daniel's conceits were satirized in *Every Man in*, and Puntvarolo's arcadianism in *Every Man out of his Humour*. 'Pure and neat Language I love, yet plaine and customary' -- words written long after the date of this play (*Disc*. 1870) -- sum up Jonson's consistent attitude. The tendency to make other characters comment on a speaker's oddities of phrase becomes almost a mannerism with him. [4]

We must agree that Juniper is not so obviously a burlesque of Gabriel Harvey as Crispinius and Demetrius are burlesques of Marston and Dekker. However, Juniper is a character in an early play written before Jonson had

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[3] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 310
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 311

attained full pungency in satire. Attention is certainly drawn to Juniper's speech:

> Juniper. Valentine, I prithee ruminate thy selfe welcome. What fortuna de la Guerra? (Valentine. O how pittifully are these words forc't. As though they were pumpt out on's belly.)
>
> The Case is Altered, I,iv, 16-19

> Juniper. O God sir, I may say frustra to the comprehension of your intellection. Maximilian. Before the Lord, he speakes all riddle, I thinke. I must have a comment ere I can conceive him.
>
> Ibid., I, viii, 11-14

Jonson does not draw such attention to Juniper's speech merely to lengthen the play. If he has not gone on to present a thorough portrait of Harvey, that does not preclude the possibility of a few glances at the man's style. Let us admit that in this play Jonson shows disdain for overwrought language and that it is plausible to accept Harvey as his prime model.

That Anthony Munday was satirized in this play is undeniable, and it is interesting to note the criticisms directed at him. He is represented by Balladino who is first identified as the 'Pageant Poet to the City of Millaine.'[5] His reliance on trite phrases is soon apparent as he concludes a speech:

> ...I am no Gentleman borne I must confesse, but my minde to me a kingdome is truly.
>
> Ibid., I, ii, 41-2

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5. The Case is Altered, I, ii, 29-30

The italicized phrase, so marked by Jonson, is from a song by Sir Edward Dyer. Balladino actually claims his use of stale, borrowed material as a virtue:

> ...such things ever are like bread, which the staler it is, the more holesome.
> ...
> I do use as much stale stuffe, though I say it my selfe, as any man does in that kind I am sure. Did you see the last Pageant, I set forth?
>
> Ibid., I, ii, 45-6, 48-50

Not only does he pride himself on using shopworn phrases; he deprecates any new idea such as the application of the humor theory to character building in drama:

> Why looke you sir, I write so plaine, and keepe that old Decorum, that you must of necessitie like it; mary you shall have some now (as for example, in plaies) that will have every day new trickes, and write you nothing but humours: indeede this pleases the Gentlemen: but the common sort they care not for't, they know not what to make on't, they looke for good matter, they, and are not edified with such toyes.
>
> Ibid., I, ii, 58-65

These lines do more than ridicule Munday; they mock the tastes of contemporary audiences. Scorn for the audiences is more apparent when Balladino insists:

> ...they would have me make such plaies, but as I tell hem, and they'le give me twenty pound a play, I'le not raise my vaine.
> ...
> Tut give me the penny, give me the peny, I care not for the Gentlemen I, let me have a good ground, no matter for the pen, the plot shall carry it.
>
> Ibid., I, ii, 71-3, 75-7

Finally, Munday's reputation is twitted as Onion applauds Balladino:

> Indeed that's right, you are in print already
> for the best plotter.
>
> *Ibid.*, I, ii, 78-9

And Balladino adds:

> I, I might as well ha bene put in for a
> dumb shew too.
>
> *Ibid.*, I, ii, 80-1

It was in Meres' Palladis Tamia, 1598, that Munday had been cited as a competent plotter.

From this series of comments we may derive some idea of Jonson's conception of good writing in the first years of his career. He detested the use of hackneyed phrases as he would later detest that spawn of writers who could only echo the ranting vein of Kyd. And he wanted good material in plays: material fit to feed the minds of the best educated men in the realm. No mere spinning of tales for the delight of the rout in the pit would satisfy him. Add to these opinions the aversion from tasteless extravagance that is apparent in the presentation of Juniper, and we have a good explanation of his attitude. Jonson's scorn for the mass of playgoers was detected in a previously quoted passage, and a speech by Onion makes that scorn more obvious. Speaking of the humour plays derided by Balladino, Onion says:

> You are in the right, I'le not give a half-
> peny to see a thousand on 'hem. I was at
> one the last Tearme, but & ever I see a more
> roguish thing, I am a peece of cheese, & no
> onion, nothing but kings & princes in it, the
> foole came not out a jot.
>
> *Ibid.*, I, ii, 66-70

Throughout his career Jonson maintained that to have the majority of the audience approve a play was no proof of its worth. Frequently, such an attitude was purely defensive in face of the fact that his plays were decidedly unpopular. But it must be admitted that he respected his own standards and wrote what he thought fit rather than what was fitted to please. It must also be admitted that Jonson produced some splendid work by adhering to his own standards.

Jonson's interest in language is the first of his critical approaches to literature that we shall examine. He used taste and a vast store of knowledge in devising the language of his own plays and expected other writers to take similar pains in their work. The finest part of his literary criticism is found in this rational analysis of language.

In his second play, Every Man in His Humour, the proportion of literary criticism increases while remaining focused on faults of style. The first of many poetasters appears, and Matthew is the best example of this character type in the play. Matthew has been previously cited as a typical gallant eager to parlay a little wit and a minimum effort into a reputation in society. Though he falls into the general category of the gallants and is in some respects quite different from such poetasters as Crispinius and Demetrius, Matthew still serves to illustrate Jonson's

loathing for stale or overwrought phrases. His favorite reading is The Spanish Tragedy, and all extravagant language appeals to him. Since Matthew is a thoroughly ridiculous character, who proves to be a plagiarist and coward, there can be no question that what he approves must be in bad taste. Indeed, to mock a play or poem by having it bandied about by fools is a favorite device of Jonson. Quicksilver, an obvious Jonsonian character in Eastward Ho, often declaims a few lines from Kyd's play:

> When this eternall substance of my soule,
> ...
> Did live imprison'd in my wanton flesh.
> ...
> I was a Courtier in the Spanish court,
> And Don Andrea was my name.
> Eastward Ho, II, i, 130, 133, 135-6*

Turning back to Matthew, we find that extravagant comparisons built on a simple formula appealed to him:

> Oh eyes, no eyes but fountaines fraught with teares...
> Oh life, no life, but lively forme of death...
> Oh world, no world, but masse of publique wrongs...
> Confusde and fild with murther and misdeeds.
> Every Man in His Humour, I, iii, 135-9*

These lines afford a good example of what Jonson scorned, particularly in their reliance on a formula, which even used only once, is not a very striking device.

Bobadill also enters into the satire on language-damagers. He is the man of much talk and small ability who fusses over the use of the few foreign terms he has mastered. He assures Matthew:

> ...the best practis'd gentlemen of the time
> terme it the passado....
>
> Ibid., I, iii, 210-11

The pseudo-cultured men who larded their speech with a few foreign phrases annoyed Jonson intensely. He mocks a servant who is a self-important busybody by thus describing him:

> Latimer. Is he a scholler? Host. Nothing
> lesse.
> But colours for it, as you see, wear's black:
> And speakes a little taynted, fly-blowne Latin,
> After the Schoole. Beaufort. Of Stratford
> o'the Bow.
> For Lillies Latine, is to him unknown.
>
> The New Inn, II, iv, 20-4

He even chided Shakespeare's innocuous "Et tu Brute", by making the phrase the last speech of Carlo Buffone before his sometime friends, tired of his scurrilous talk, seal his lips with wax. The Oxford Editors, in a note on the scene, point out:

> There can be little doubt that Jonson is burlesquing it. He would know the account in Suetonius, that Caesar died without speaking...[6]

The satire on word usage in Every Man in His Humour is confined to the poetical ambitions of Matthew, the fencing jargon of Bobadill, and Stephen's foolish adulation of all things in bad taste. In the next play, Every Man out of His Humour, the ridicule of language habits is

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[6] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 479

again confined to three characters. The speech mannerisms of Puntvarolo are extensively displayed and their extravagant nonsense is freely commented on by the other characters. His opening speech to the gentlewoman in the castle is typical:

> Stay: mine eye hath (on the instant) through the bountie of the window, receiv'd the forme of a Nymph. I will step forward three pases: of the which, I will barely retire one; and (after some little flexure of the knee) with an erected grace salute her (one, two, and three.) Sweet lady, God save you.
> Every Man out of His Humour, II, ii, 8-13

He can even sink to lower depths:

> Most debonaire, and luculent lady, I decline me low, as the basis of your altitude.
> Ibid., II, iii, 37-8

> And see! Here comes one that will carrie coales, ergo, will hold my dogge. My honest friend, may I commit the tuition of this dogge to thy prudent care?
> Ibid., V, i, 16-9

Puntvarolo is not so often at fault for completely misunderstanding a word as he is at fault for using a manner of speech not at all suited to the occasion. Who but a fool would speak of committing "the tuition" of a dog to someone's "prudent care"? Like many other fops, Puntvarolo believes it is the mark of education and culture to use a lofty tone of address at all times and to sweeten one's speech with all manner of extravagant comparisons.

As well as showing bad taste and a complete mis-

understanding of some of the words he uses, Puntvarolo struggles to wring in an occasional Latin word. We have already noted that Jonson sometimes characterizes fools by having them dabble in foreign terms. He greatly detested all men who tried to season their talk with a few Latinisms. As with English, he insisted that the use of foreign terms must be controlled by a thorough understanding of the language. With ample justification he believed that few other contemporary playwrights, besides himself and Chapman, had such a grasp of classic literature as to justify their use of foreign words and phrases.

Clove and Orange are the other two characters in Every Man out of His Humour whose speech has satirical implications. Marston is probably the model for their discourse, particularly in the first forty lines of Act III, Scene iv. These lines are packed with verbal nonsense, and early in the passage Clove says:

> ...pr'y thee let's talke fustian a little,
> and gull 'hem: make 'hem beleeve we are
> great schollers.
>
> Ibid., II, iv, 7-8

Jonson's satire at the expense of Marston's vocabulary is the best example of his rational analysis of language. In two early plays there are such flings at Marston as these:

> Valentine. Faith a few Caprichious gallants.
>
> The Case is Altered, I, vii, 74

> Amorphus. ...shee is apt to misprision.
> Cynthia's Revels, IV, iv, 31-2

In Discoveries there is a statement of the author's attitude towards such terms as he has worked into the speech of his ridiculous characters:

> You are not to cast a Ring for the perfumed termes of the time, as Accommodation, Complement, Spirit, &c. But use them properly in their place, as others.
> Discoveries, 2274-7

These comments clearly show that Jonson is objecting to the choice and use of words. There is a weakness in this objection because Jonson himself was responsible for introducing a number of "inkhorn" terms into English. The test of time has approved many of the terms he disparaged while condemning some words which he used. Taking, for example, the list of words which Crispinius vomits when Horace purges him of his bad language, we can see that Jonson erred in disliking many of these words. The complete list is:

> retrograde, reciprocall, incubus, glibbery, lubricall, defunct, magnificate, spurious snotteries, chilblaind, clumsie, barmy froth, puffy, inflate, turgidous, ventositous, oblatrant, furibund, fatuate, strenuous, conscious dampe, porumped, clutcht, snarling gusts, quaking custard, obstupefact.
> Poetaster, V, iii, 468-527*

Later usage has condoned (sometimes in alternate form):

> retrograde, reciprocall, incubus, defunct, clumsie, puffy, inflate, turgidous, furibund, fatuate, strenuous, clutcht.

In giving this list of accepted usages, no mention has been made of the adjective-noun pairs. "Conscious dampe", for example, is a usage not accepted by later practice, and it is certainly an affectation to use "conscious" in referring to inanimate objects. "Spurious snotteries" is not an unreasonable combination, and "barmy froth" is also defensible. It is perhaps unfair to find fault with Jonson's failure to predict the words which later usage would approve, but since Jonson himself used such borrowings as:

Nimfadoro,[7] arrides,[8] tentiginous[9]

and at least two untraceable words:

odling,[10] figgum,[11]

why should he take exception to the attempted borrowings and coinages of other writers? He is really claiming for himself a freedom which he does not allow other writers -- though he might have argued that only men with a real mastery of foreign tongues are justified in borrowing from them. However, in considering Jonson's judgements of word usage the exact nature of the judgements must be clearly understood. Although it is certainly true that he used words which never became current and rejected

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7. Every Man out of His Humour, II, iii, 104
8. Ibid, II, i, 80
9. The Devil is an Ass, II, iii, 25
10. Every Man out of His Humour, The Characters, i. 86
11. The Devil is an Ass, V, viii, 81

some words which were to win general acceptance, his objection to the use of some words was not always a rejection of the words themselves. It was the context in which they were used that he protested against, which is clear from the last sentence in the previously quoted passage from Discoveries:

> But use them properly in their place, as others.
> Discoveries, 2277

That Jonson was criticizing Marston's use of the words rather than the words themselves is apparent in the few instances in Poetaster where we see a word used in context:

> I am most strenuously well, I thanke you, sir.
> Poetaster, I, i, 13

However, later writers have certainly not agreed with Jonson in the use of all these words. Note these examples of usages which he derided:

> Rampe up, my genius; be not retrograde;
> . . .
> What, shall thy lubricall and glibberie Muse
> Live, as shee were defunct, like punke in
> stewes?
> . . .
> Upon that puft-up lumpe of barmy froth,
> Or clumsie chil-blain'd judgement....
> Ibid., V, iii, 275, 277-8, 284-6

"Lubricall" and "glibberie" are strange to the ear in these lines, but the other words are not used unreasonably. That Jonson's crusade for more careful usage was justified and had tangible results is attested in the

note of the Oxford Editors on the satire of Marston's language in Poetaster:

> The emetic had a chastening effect on Marston's later style; no outlandish phrases are to be found in any of his works printed after Poetaster. And this is specially noteworthy in What You Will, written and acted before Poetaster.
> [12]

The general impression which Jonson's concern for the use of words creates is of a man proud of his scholarship arbitrarily censuring the usages of his contemporaries. His censures were frequently sound objections to affected usage, but even he was sometimes at fault in using strange, new or borrowed, words. Such criticism of vocabulary does not come unexpectedly from the writer of an early English grammar, but it certainly serves to show how very scholastic his attitude was on many occasions.

2. The Use of Language in Characterization

Another idea of Jonson's which derives from his close study of language is first exemplified in The Case is Altered. This idea is best summed up in his later remark to Drummond:

> Lucan, Sidney, Gũarini make every man speak as well as themselves, forgetting decorum, for Dametas sometimes speaks Grave sentences.
> Conversations, 611-13

In Discoveries, which Oxford Editors date roughly from 1623-35,[13] Jonson advances a collateral argument:

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[12] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 578

[13] Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 213

> Language most shewes a man; speake that I may see thee. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the Image of the Parent of it, the mind. No glasse renders a mans forme, or likenesse, so true as his speech. Nay, it is likened to a man; and as we consider feature, and composition in a man; so words in Language: in the greatnesse, aptnesse, sound, structure, and harmony of it.
> ...
> And according to their Subject, these stiles vary, and lose their names: For that which is high and lofty declaring excellent matter, becomes vast and tumorous, speaking of petty and inferiour things....
>
> Discoveries, 2031-38, 2051-54

These are clear statements of his attitude in the latter part of his life and are mature judgements free from senile rancour. They agree with the policy of his earliest plays.

In The Case is Altered the servants, and particularly the two bumpkins, speak in prose larded with favorite expressions such as, "slid", "rogue", and "Gods so". It is only persons of higher rank who speak with the taste of Count Ferneze:

> Never was man so palpably abusd,
> My sonne so basely marted; and my selfe
> Am made the subject of your mirth and scorne.
>
> The Case is Altered, IV, x, 2-4

In Every Man in His Humour there is no broad division into speakers of prose and verse, for most of the play is prose. But Bobadill with his store of oaths and Stephen with his simple, sometimes repetitious, speech are easily distinguished. One would never confuse Stephen's speech:

> Oh, now I see who he laught at: hee laught at some body in that letter. By this good

> light, and he had laught at me, I would
> have told mine uncle.
>
> Every Man in His Humour, I, ii, 71-4

with the loftier tone of the elder Kno'well:

> My Labouring spirit being late opprest
> With my sonnes follie, can embrace no rest,
> Till it hath plotted by advise and skill,
> How to reduce him from affected will
> To reasons manage....
>
> Ibid., II, ii, 1-5

Though the words used by literary characters are never identical to the speech of real men, a reasonable approximation can be attained, and such an approximation begins with the realization that there are different levels of speech. For all his learning and love of ancient literature, Jonson was not utterly devoted to the grand manner. In such plays as Sejanus and Catiline every character is a good speaker and most of them are orators, but in his comedies Jonson varies the speech of his characters from the abusive and vulgar tone of Ursla, the pig woman, to the brilliant discourse of Volpone. Not only does he insist that an author should not make all his characters speak as well as himself; he also adds individual touches to the speech of his characters. Dapper and Face, for example, speak the same language, but while Dapper is a foolish young man, proud of his knowledge of the law and eager to turn an easy penny, Face is a cunning confidence man utterly contemptuous of the young clark. Notice then the conversation between the two

when Face pretends to be fearful of having the alchemist's practice discovered by the authorities:

> Face. Nay, heare me, sir, you know the law
> Better, I thinke -- Dapper. I should, sir,
> and the danger.
> You know I shew'd the statute to you? Face. You
> did so.
> Dapper. And will I tell, then? By this hand, of flesh,
> Would it might never wright good court-hand, more,
> If I discover. What doe you thinke of me,
> That I am a Chiause? Face. What's that?
> Dapper. The Turke, was here --
> As one would say, doe you thinke I am a Turke?
> Face. I'll tell the Docotor so. Dapper. Doe, good
> sweet Captaine.
> Face. Come, noble Docotor, 'pray thee, let's prevaile,
> This is the gentleman, and he is no Chiause.
> Subtle. Captaine, I have return'd you all my answere.
> I would doe much, sir, for your love -- But this
> I neither may, nor can. Face. Tut, doe not say so.
> You deale, now, with a noble fellow, Docotor,
> One that will thanke you, richly, and h'is no Chiause:
> Let that, sir, move you.
> The Alchemist, I, ii, 19-36

In Dapper there is an echo of the would-be fop who lards his speech with a few foreign terms. The contemptuous Face quickly takes up the word used by Dapper and repeats it mockingly. To further emphasize Dapper's vacuity Jonson has him say what does not need to be said, as in the expression:

> ...By this hand, of flesh...
> l. 23

Jonson's attempts at characterization are sometimes too heavy-handed. In Bartholomew Fair, for example, the fourth scene of the fourth act is devoted to the game of vapors, a kind of mock-quarreling engaged in by Knockhum, Nodern, Cutting, Whit, et al. The scene is intended to display the folly of the characters, but

the auditor soon becomes so angry with the author for subjecting him to such dull stuff that the characters are completely forgotten and the author's intention foiled. Too often, Jonson was willing to neglect the dramatic action for the sake of heaping further ridicule on scorned characters. This tendency is successfully repressed in his three finest plays, it gets slightly out of hand in Bartholomew Fair, and it thoroughly disrupts Cynthia's Revels.

Jonson knew well enough that effective characterization is essential to the success of any play. Even if his characters are never sympathetically portrayed and are one-sided for the sake of satire they are still individuals. In his best plays they are interesting individuals playing vital parts in well devised dramatic actions. Even if his desire to be dramatic or merely abusive led Jonson to spend entirely too much time depicting the activities of Demetrius in Poetaster or to dwell too long on the mere stupidity of the fops in Cynthia's Revels, we must still admit that the production of three such splendid plays as The Alchemist, Volpone, and Epicoene and lesser works such as Bartholomew Fair, The Staple of News, and Every Man in His Humour establishes his greatness. That some of his work is poor does not alter the fact that some of it is excellent. The excellence of his best work derives as much from brilliant

characterizations as it does from ingenious structure.

3. Styles of Language

The language used in plays is not determined only by the demands of characterization. The style of the language reflects the nature and ability of the author. Today, for example, numerous novels masquerading as frank attempts at realism owe their success to the fact that their authors are willing to concentrate upon sadism and depravity. To add to the "realism" of such novels innumerable oaths, some of them hardly ever before seen in print, are used in conversations. It is certainly true that some living persons swear and curse as a matter of course in conversation, but why is this one characteristic of real conversation emphasized? Why are the authors who insist on being realistic in this particular willing to give the conversation of their characters an unrealistic grammatical correctness? As all authors do, they make the conversation of their characters more compact and effective than the conversation of ordinary people usually is. It is true that the conversation of all but the most literate people is interupted by too many grunts and "ahs", depends too much on the actual tone of speaking, and is too loose

and rambling to become interesting reading merely by being transcribed. When these novelists swerve from realism by making the conversations of their characters artificially correct and readable, why do they insist on being realistic in the use of profanity? They do not merely eschew certain euphemisms; they dwell on profanity. This dwelling on profanity is nothing more than pandering to the worst tastes of their readers.

Jonson sometimes utilized a vulgar style of conversation, but in so doing he did not go beyond the limits of the taste of his time. Consider Surly's answer after Mammon has insisted Surly will have to believe in alchemy after he has actually seen base metal transmuted to gold:

> Yes, when I see't, I will.
> But, if my eyes doe cossen me so (and I
> Giving 'hem no occasion) sure, I'll have
> A whore, shall pisse 'hem out, next day.
> *The Alchemist*, II, i, 42-5

This speech would jar a modern audience, but it would not have surprised Elizabethan playgoers. Jonson did not attempt to curry public favor by using language not common in the plays of the time. The important feature of Jonson's language is not that it had a particular style, but that it had a range of style. He could suggest the brawling of Smithfield or the discourse of the Roman Senate. His weakness was his inability to convey kind or generous sentiments with real conviction. His

sharpest epigrams and finest dialogue are angry or mocking. The scathing tone of much of his writing is apparent in Corvino's remark upon hearing that a mountebank has cured Volpone:

> Death! that damn'd mountebanke! but, for the law,
> Now, I could kill the raskall: 't cannot be,
> His oyle should have that vertue. Ha' not I
> Knowne him a common rogue, come fidling in
> To th' *osteria*, with a tumbling whore,
> And, when he ha's done all his forc'd trickes, beene glad
> Of a poore spooneful of dead wine, with flyes in't?
> *Volpone*, II, vi, 10-16

In the last lines of this speech we have an almost revolting picture of the lot of a shabby mountebank. Revulsion is produced here, not by the use of shocking or incredibly vulgar words, but by a matter of fact description containing significant details. Individually, there is nothing unusual about "dead", "wine", or "flyes", but combined and used as Jonson uses them they almost produce a tightening of the throat. Such effective use of ordinary words is style.

Except when Jonson sets out to imitate the speech of people in the lower levels of society or when he uses colloquial expressions, the speech of his characters is quite literate. Even such a fool as Sir Politique Would-Bee is allowed to use cultured speech. It is what the knight talks about, not how he says it, which stamps him as a fool. Expressing his opinion that the deceased

court fool, Stone, was a spy, Sir Politique says:

> Nay, I have observe'd him, at your publique ordinarie,
> Take his advertisement, from a traveller
> (A conceal'd states-man) in a trencher of meat:
> And, instantly, before the meale was done,
> Convey an answere in a tooth-pick
> Volpone, II, i, 76-80

The language used here is not banal, indeed, the expression, "convey an answere" is uncommonly fine speech. However, Sir Politique does sound like a suspicious fool, and his ridiculous allegations are worthy of such a one as Titus Oates. Jonson understood, as so many modern humorists do not, that a character, to appear stupid, does not have to stand on the stage with his mouth hanging half open and grunt monosyllables. To suggest indecency and stupidity without using language that in itself is either indecent or stupid is style. Nothing could be more tedious than enduring an evening in a theatre filled with common talk and vulgarisms. There is a delight in hearing words used effectively and a greater delight in finding familiar words used in new and effective expressions. Good writers afford us this delight, and, for so doing, Jonson earns high praise.

Jonson also recognized that an unvarying level of style would be tiresome, and thus, in his finest plays we find variations in the level of speech. In Volpone, for example, the speech is in the main simple but literate.

However; this general level of speech is intermingled with passages of fine poetry. In The Alchemist, three levels of speech are frequently interchanged. In the opening scene, simple, literate speech is interspersed with oaths and abusive language. Throughout the play Surly is inclined to break forth with terse and foul denunciations. There is not so much pure poetry in The Alchemist as in Volpone, but Jonson gives Sir Epicure Mammon some extravagant speeches quite different from the usual tenor of his poetry but very effective.

Jonson very aptly sums up the need for a variety of styles:

> The wise, and knowing Critick will not say,
> This worst, or better is, before he weigh,
> Where every piece be perfect in the kind:
> And then, though in themselves he difference find,
> Yet if the place require it where they stood,
> The equall fitting makes them equall good.
> The Sad Shepherd, Prologue, 43-8

This remark not only indicates the necessity of variation in language, it also shows Jonson's conception of the unity of a good play. Jonson's understanding of dramatic unity will be discussed later, for now, it is enough to say that the height of Jonson's art is not a few glittering pieces worked into an indifferent setting. As a good painting is a composite, with drab base colors used to accentuate the contrasting highlights, so Jonson's plays are highly integrated actions heightened by the skillful

contrasting of characters and the deft variation of styles.

B. Poets and Poetry

Few things reveal Jonson's earnest faith in reason more clearly than his frequently iterated conception of the purpose of poetry. He insisted that all poets, and himself in particular, had the responsibility of serving as instructors to mankind. Out of many statements concerning his purpose as a poet, these few are offered to show that his conception of his purpose was constant:

> Ile strip the ragged follies of the time,
> Naked, as at their birth....
> *Every Man out of His Humour*
> GREX (After the second sounding) 17-8

> Words, above action: matter, above words.
> *Cynthia's Revels*, Prologue, 20

> ...I have labour'd, for their instruction, and amendment, to reduce, not onely the ancient formes, but manners of the scene, the easinesse, the propriety, the innocence, and last the doctrine, which is the principall end of *poesie*, to informe men, in the best reason of living. *
> *Volpone*, Dedication, 104-9

> In all his *poemes*, stil, hath been this measure,
> To mixe profit, with your pleasure....
> *Volpone*, Prologue, 7-8

> ...the Makers double scope,
> To *profit*, and *delight*....
> *The Staple of News*, Epilogue, 1-2

There can be no question that Jonson's work is almost always designed to meet these requirements. Even *Poetaster*, while serving as a personal answer to his

rivals and defense of himself, is primarily concerned with vindicating true poetry and worthy poets.[14] The Case is Altered can scarcely be called instructive but may be excused as an early work produced while the author was still forging his technique. Every Man in His Humour, Every Man out of His Humour, and Cynthia's Revels, whatever the dramatic weaknesses of the last two plays, present a portrayal of social fatuity hard to match. If the examples of foolish pride, stupid ambition, and downright hypocrisy presented in these plays will not move men to weigh their social aspirations and pastimes more carefully, few things will. Sejanus should show men the evils of conscienceless ambition, and if it does not advance a convincing argument it is not because Jonson was false to his principles but because he had not the compassion for erring humanity that is the heart of great tragic writing. Eastward Ho is a middle class rivals and defence of himself, is primarily concerned with vindicating true comedy and worthy poets.[14] The Case is Altered can scarcely be called instructive but may be excused as an early work produced while the author was still forging his technique. Every Man in his Humour, Every Man out of his Humour, and Cynthia's Revels, whatever the dramatic weaknesses of the last two plays, present a portrayal of social frailty hard to match. If the examples of foolish pride, stupid ambition, and downright hypocrisy presented in these plays will not move men to weigh their social aspirations or positions more carefully, few things will. Sejanus should show men the evils of unconscientious ambition, and if it does not advance a convincing argument it is not because Jonson was false to his principles but because he had not the command for giving humanity that is the mark of great tragic writing. Catiline is in a similar class romance filled with a bourgeois morality not found in other plays by Jonson. It seems certain that the unique qualities of the play, as contrasted with the other plays in the Oxford Edition, result from the collaboration of Chapman and Marston. Though the play is not as effective in ridiculing vice and folly as some of Jonson's plays, it is still clearly on the side of soberness and industry. In the treatment of Quicksilver there are flashes of Jonson's zest for scourging foolish social ambition. *Volpone* is a fascinating study of greed, and if the main character is rather too likeable at the outset, at least the greedy old men he preys upon are thoroughly distasteful examples of sordid greed. *Epicoene* is less obviously exploring a human fault than most of the plays so far mentioned. Surely, however, Morose is a not ineffective representation of the futility of trying to withdraw from life, and there are some deft touches of social satire worked into the play. If any play of Jonson's is pure fun to read or watch, *The Alchemist* must have that distinction. Yet, even as this most masterful of plots unfolds, we are laughing at men whose follies are repeated in every age. The procession of dupes preyed on by Subtle, Face, and Doll represents the gullible eagerness that on occasion leads normally prudent men astray.

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[14] Talbert, E. W. "The Purpose and Technique of Jonson's Poetaster," Studies in Philology, Vol. XLII. Talbert argues that Poetaster is a theatrical ars poetica devoted to defending the reputation of true poets. He maintains that the satire against Marston and Dekker is of minor importance when compared with the intent to hold "up for laughter the barbaric follies, the lack of intellectual discipline, which his poetic credo attacked". Talbert points out that the banishment of Ovid is skillfully made to be the result of Caesar's anger that "the poetical banqueters ...are all poetasters." Jonson suppresses the scandalous implications of the scene and continues to focus attention on poets and poetry. The cause of Ovid's banishment was an error in Caesar's judgement resulting from the lies of Histrio and Lupus. The enemies of poetry are roundly denounced in Act V.

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After writing *The Alchemist* Jonson entered a period of slow decline. *Catiline* is ineffective in the same way as romance filled with a bourgeois morality not found in other plays by Jonson. It seems certain that the unique qualities of the play, as contrasted with the other plays in the Oxford edition, result from the collaboration of Chapman and Marston. Though the play is not as effective in ridiculing vice and folly as some of Jonson's plays, it is still clearly on the side of soberness and industry. In the treatment of Quicksilver there are flashes of Jonson's zest for scourging foolish social ambition. *Volpone* is a fascinating study of greed, and if the main character is rather too likeable at the outset, at least the greedy old men he preys upon are thoroughly distasteful examples of sordid greed. *Epicoene* is less obviously exploring a human fault than most of the plays so far mentioned. Surely, however, Morose is not ineffective representation of the futility of trying to withdraw from life, and there are some deft touches of social satire worked into the play. If any play of Jonson's is pure fun to read or watch, *The Alchemist* must have that distinction. Yet, even as this most masterful of plots unfolds, we are laughing at men whose follies are repeated in every age. The procession of dupes preyed on by Subtle, Face, and Doll represents the gullible eagerness that on occasion leads normally prudent men astray.

After writing *The Alchemist* Jonson entered a period of slow decline. *Catiline* is ineffective in the same way as

Sejanus. Bartholomew Fair has value as an example of life on the common level and shows how common folk may be practiced on. It falls short of repeating the triumph of The Alchemist on a more vulgar level. Social satire is again the main interest in The Devil is an Ass. The Staple of News is an effort in a new direction and is a sometimes tedious attempt to ridicule the gossip mongers of the day. The New Inn and The Magnetic Lady are further excursions into social satire with increased emphasis on the story. A Tale of a Tub was probably, in its original form, a harmless beginning piece, but as finally revised it is an unworthy assault on Inigo Jones.

We may thus credit Jonson with a consistent effort to combine profit with pleasure in his plays. If he never stirs us as Marlowe and Shakespeare could stir us it is because of his personal limitations and not because he was careless of his purpose.

Jonson's purpose as a poet is intimately connected with his conception of a true poet. The Dedication of Volpone is his most enlightening comment on poets and poetry:

> For, if men will impartially, and not a-squint, looke toward the offices, and function of a Poet, they will easily conclude to themselves, the impossibility of any mans being the good Poet, without first being a good man. He that is said to be able to informe yong-men to all good disciplines, inflame growne-men to all great vertues, keepe old-men in their best and supreme state, or

> as they decline to child-hood, recover them to their first strength; that comes forth the interppreter, and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine, no lesse then humane, a master in manners; and can alone (or with a few) effect the businesse of man-kind....
>
> Dedication, 20-30*

The first important idea evident here is that a good poet must be a good man.

Milton, too, espoused this idea, although he invested it with a pious asceticism which would have dismayed Jonson. Milton's statement:

> ...a good Book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit...
> 15.

is surely a reflection of the idea that good writing can only proceed from a good man. Much earlier in his life, Milton had written to Diodati:

> On such a poet are imposed, too, a youth free of crime, pure and chaste, and a character unyielding, and a name without taint...
> 16.

That Milton and Jonson, fine scholars both and both determined to bring a new mastery of technique and a high purpose to English letters, should agree that living a good life is a prerequisite to producing good poetry is logical.

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15. Milton, John, Selected Prose, ed. M. W. Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 280

16. Milton, John, Poetical Works, ed. H. C. Beeching, Oxford University Press, 1950, p. 574

Undoubtedly, if a poet is to offer good advice to his readers, if he is to mix profit with pleasure, he must have some seeds of goodness in him. Still, it is a very idealistic concept. If anything produced a romantic state of mind in Jonson, it was thinking about poetry, and occasionally his statements on the subject are too sweeping and hence, specious.

In Discoveries, for example, is this extreme description of a poet:

> But that he which can faine a Common-wealth (which is the Poet) can governe it with Counsels, strengthen it with Religion, and Morals; is all of these: (i.e. philosopher, divine, and statesman) Wee do not require in him meere Elocution; or an excellent faculty in verse; but the exact knowledge of all vertues, and their Contraries; with ability to render the one lov'd, the other hated, by his proper embattaling them.
>
> Discoveries, 1034-41

Such descriptions of the true poet are idealistic, but they serve as good targets to aim at. Thus, even if it is true that even our greatest writers could not claim to be philosophers, theologians, statesmen, and scientists rolled in one, even if their knowledge was far from complete and perfect, still it is true that the best writers surprise us by the extent of their knowledge and the keenness of their insight. A good writer must observe accurately and read with attention, and the best writers show a wide and insatiable curiosity. Jonson is thus in-

dicating the right direction, even if he points at an unattainable goal when he asks the true poet to be master of all wisdom. Returning to the first statement, that a good poet must be a good man, it is obvious that this is similarly true. A good writer can be a good deal less than a paragon of virtue, and the moral rank of our outstanding writers would not necessarily correlate with their artistic rank, but none of our finest poets are known as vicious or evil men. It is, for example, the candour and tolerant humor of Chaucer which makes the Wife of Bath, the Monk, the Clerk, and the Host memorable and very human characters.

We may say of Jonson that though he was not perfect he was an honest and warm-hearted person. His temper got out of control at times, but his reaction was always direct and honest: he never resorted to vicious subterfuge. He flattered his king and patrons beyond the limits of honesty now and then, but he never persisted for long in a course of deliberate flattery in hopes of personal aggrandizement. His most serious misdeed was killing Gabriel Spencer, but the blame for the duel was not entirely with Jonson. Jonson did tell Drummond of some mistresses,[17] and we can be sure that his moral standards were, in this respect, far from Puritanical. However, his marriage endured, and his epigrams

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[17] *Conversations*, 287-94, 476-82

on his children reveal a tender affection. When set beside the persistent condemnation of licentiousness in the plays, his remarks to Drummond begin to smack of bravado.

In the field of learning we must regard him even more highly. He was one of the leading scholars of his generation and read and wrote with admirable industry. If his poetry has a finished and polished quality it is because he read and thought and wrote and rewrote. In *Discoveries* he explains how to develop a good style:

> *For* a man to write well, there are required three Necessaries. To reade the best Authors, observe the best Speakers: and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider, what ought to be written; and after what manner; Hee must first thinke, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of both matter, and words, that the composition be comely; and to doe this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labour'd, and accurate: seeke the best, and be not glad of the forward conceipts, or first words, that offer themselves to us, but judge of what wee invent; and order what wee approve.
>
> *Discoveries*, 1697-1709

It would be hard to deny the soundness of this doctrine, and it is precisely in this matter of study and practice that Jonson set the example for his time. There are ways of checking his thoroughness. There are, for example, two texts of *Every Man in His Humour*, and Jonson revised the text carefully before issuing the play in the Folio of 1616. Here are the changes he makes in the speech of

Kno'Well: In the Quarto of 1601 it read:

> Well, it is the strangest letter that ever I read.
> Is this the man, my sonne (so oft) hath prays'd
> To be the happiest, and most pretious wit
> That ever was familiar with Art?
> Now (by our Ladies blessed sonne) I sweare,
> I rather thinke him most infortunate,
> In the possession of such holy giftes,
> Being the master of so loose a spirit.
> Why what unhallow'd ruffian would have writ,
> With so prophane a pen, unto his friend?
> The modest paper eene lookes pale for griefe
> To feele her virgin-cheeke defilde and staind
> With such a blacke and criminall *inscription*.
> Well, I had thought my sone could not have straied,
> So farre from judgement, as to mart himselfe
> Thus cheapely, (in the open trade of scorne)
> To geering *follie*, and fantastique *humour*.
> But now I see *opinion* is a foole,
> And hath abusde my sences.
> *Every Man in His Humour*, I, i, 176-94

In the Folio of 1616 the letter is signed, "From the windmill". Kno'Well's speech then follows:

> From the *Burdello*, it might come as well;
> The *Spittle*: or *Pict-hatch*. Is this the man,
> My sonne hath sung so, for the happiest wit,
> The choysest braine, the times hath sent us forth?
> I know not what he may be, in the arts;
> Nor what in schooles: but surely, for his manners,
> I judge him a prophane, and dissolute wretch:
> Worse, by possession of such great good gifts,
> Being the master of so loose a spirit.
> Why, what unhallow'd ruffian would have writ,
> In such a scurrilous manner, to a friend!
> Why should he thinke, I tell my Apri-cotes?
> Or play the *Hesperian* Dragon, with my fruit,
> To watch it? Well, my sonne, I'had thought
> Y' had had more judgement, t'have made election
> Of your companions, then t'have tane on trust,
> Such petulant, geering gamesters, that can spare
> No argument, or subject from their jest.
> But I perceive, affection makes a foole
> Of any man, too much the father.
> *Every Man in His Humour*, I, ii, 92-111

The mention of counting his apricots and guarding his

fruit refers to a gibe in the letter. This second speech is more effectively related to the letter that precedes it, and the speaker's meaning is made more clear by some of the changes. In particular, the closing remark of the second letter is much more striking than the conclusion of the first letter.

C. What Plays Should be Made of

As we should expect of a man who conceived the true poet to be dedicated to high purposes, Jonson had great concern for the kind of material used in plays. Certainly, a writer must select his material with an eye on the purpose with which he writes. Thus, Jonson's judgement of what is fit for inclusion in plays is related to his interest in the didactic value of drama. His protests against the taste of the time afford ample evidence of what he would not admit in a good play. Closely linked with these protests are his general condemnation of the hacks who catered to the most ill-developed tastes:

> O, how I hate the monstrousnesse of time,
> Where every servile imitating spirit,
> (Plagu'd with an itching leprosie of wit)
> In a meere halting fury, strives to fling
> His ulc'rous body in the Thespian spring,
> And streight leap's forth a Poet! but as lame
> as VULCAN, or the founder of Cripple-gate.
> Every Man out of His Humour
> GREX (After the second sounding), 66-72

His unflagging interest in language was ever clear in his mind, as when he castigated the pretended poets for

their tasteless desire to use any and all new words:

> ...your ignorant Poetasters of the time, who when they have got acquainted with a strange word, never rest till they have wroong it in, though it loosen the whole fabricke of their sense.
>
> Cynthia's Revels, II, iv, 15-8

In Jonson's protests against the taste of the time there is an earnestness almost entirely lacking in his comments on the writers of the day. This greater earnestness possibly results from the fact that Jonson is better as an expounder of theories than as a critic of specific works. Certainly, his broadsides against the general trends of the theatre (as he saw them) are lively reading. One long passage nicely sums up his objections to current tastes and his defence of his own work:

> But, it will here be hastily answer'd, that the writers of these dayes are other things; that, not onely their manners, but their natures are inverted; and nothing remayning with them of the dignitie of Poet, but the abused name, which every Scribe usurps: that now, especially in dramatick, or (as they terme it) stage-poetrie, nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemy, all license of offence to god, and man, is practis'd. I dare not denie a great part of this (and am sorry, I dare not) because in some mens abortive features (and would they had never boasted the light) it is over-true: But, that all are embarqu'd in this bold adventure for hell, is a most uncharitable thought, and, utter'd, a more malicious slander. For my particular, I can (and from a most cleare conscience) affirme, that I have ever trembled to thinke toward the least prophanenesse; have loathed the use of such foule, and un-wash'd baudr'y, as is now made the foode of the scene.
>
> Volpone, Dedication, 31-47 *

It is pertinent to ask what Jonson classified as obscene. His jest in The Magnetic Lady:

> Placentia. And will you make me a Vi-countesse
> too? For,
> How doe they make a Countesse? In a Chaire?
> Or 'pon a bed?
>
> The Magnetic Lady, II, v, 76-8

is no less suggestive than the "hour" puns in As You Like It.[18] In Catiline the main character is represented as a sodomite. He advises his wife:

> Get thee store, and change of women,
> As I have boyes...
>
> Catiline, I, 171-2

Later in the act one of his boys is seen to shun the advance of one of Catiline's confederates which provokes the master to say:

> Are you coying it,
> When I command you to be free, and generall
> To all? ... Arise, and shew
> But any least aversion I' your looke
> To him that bourds you next, and your throat opens.
>
> Loc. cit., 508-12

Catiline also has a slave killed, and mixes the blood with wine for a potion to seal the plot:

> I'have kill'd a slave,
> And of his bloud caus'd to be mixt with wine.
> Fill every man his bowle. There cannot be
> A fitter drinke, to make this sanction in.
>
> Loc. cit., 483-6

Considering also the plots for the seduction of foolish women that are laid in The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair and the report that since Sejanus' daughter was a virgin Macro had the executioner violate her that she might be

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[18] As You Like It, II, vii, 19-28

killed,[19] we may well wonder what Jonson would not admit in a play.

Most obviously he would not admit any action which was put in a play merely for the purpose of amusing the spectators. He would insist that everything in a play must advance the action and could cite his best plays as examples of well organized plots. In the Induction to Bartholomew Fair there is a clear indication of the kind of extraneous diversions which Jonson disliked:

> Stage-Keeper. (speaking of Bartholomew Fair and its author) ...hee has ne're a Sword, and Buckler man in his Fayre, nor a little Davy, to take toll o' the Bawds there, as in my time, nor a Kindheart, if any bodies teeth should chance to ake in his Play. Nor a Jugler with a wel-educated Ape to come over the chaine, for the King of England, and backe againe for the Prince, and sit still on his arse for the Pope, and the King of Spaine! None o' these fine sights! Nor has he the Canvas-cut i' the night, for a Hobby-horseman to creepe in to his she-neighbour, and take his leap, there! Nothing! No, and some writer (that I know) had had but the penning o' this matter, hee would ha' made you such a Jig-ajogge i' the boothes, you should ha' thought an earthquake had beene i' the Fayre!
> ...
> I'le be judg'd by you, Gentlemen, now, but for one conceit of mine! would not a fine Pumpe upon the Stage ha' done well, for a property now? and a Punque set under upon her head, with her Sterne upward, and ha' beene sous'd by my wity young masters o' the Innes o' Court?
>
> Bartholomew Fair, Induction, 13-26, 30-5

In dedicating Catiline to the Earl of Pembroke he wrote:

> ...you dare, in these Jig-given times, to countenance a legitimate Poeme.
>
> Catiline, Dedication, 5-6

[19] Sejanus, V, 849-54

Also, Morose cites as most objectionable:

> ...a play, that were nothing but fights at sea, drum, trumpet, and target!
>
> Epicoene, IV, iv, 17-8

It cannot be maintained that there is nothing extraneous in any of Jonson's plays, but taking the worst example, which is the mention of Catiline's unnatural lusts, it can be argued that this information was not put in merely to excite the spectators. The episode is but another stroke, albeit a poor one, going to make up the thoroughly distasteful sketch of Catiline. The attempted seductions mentioned earlier are never culminated, and the attempts are an effective means of showing the folly of the women concerned. They are certainly integral parts of the plot.

There is one other attitude of Jonson which bears on the selection of material for plays. It is noteworthy that in all his plays the marriage bond is sacrosanct. In no play by Jonson is an adulterous act culminated, and Julia in Poetaster, for example, is represented as more limited in her affections and more faithful than history reports her to be. The most interesting example of Jonson's respect for marriage occurs in The Devil is an Ass. In the play Wittipol is enamoured of Fitz-Dottrell's wife, Mistresse Frances. Wittipol is a young gentleman of good sense and manners who is represented most favorably at all

times. Fitz-Dottrell is a typically foolish would-be gallant. His treatment of his wife is inconsiderate and foolish while Wittipol, in paying his addresses to her, treats her with respect. In this situation, had Fitz-Dottrell met death in pursuing any of his foolish schemes the spectators would have been pleased to see the sensible Mistresse Frances free to accept the suit of Wittipol. But Jonson would have none of it. In a scene filled with comments on virtue and friendship Wittipol takes steps to protect the lady against her husband's selfish folly while relinquishing his lover's interest in her. Manly's request:

> O friend! forsake not
> The brave occasion, vertue offers you,
> To keepe you innocent...
>
> The Devil is an Ass, IV, vi, 28-30

is handsomely responded to by Wittipol:

> Vertue shall never aske my succours twice;
> Most friend, most man; your Counsells are commands:
> Lady, I can love goodness in you, more
> Then I did Beauty....
>
> Ibid., IV, vi, 35-8

For all the fact that in all his plays there is only one love scene presented with any tenderness[20.] Jonson did have strong ideas about love and the marital relationship. In this matter he depended on his reading more than his own observations as is evidenced by the long

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[20.] Poetaster, IV, ix

discourse on Platonic love in The New Inn.[21] It is also worth remembering that in the very first of his plays, The Case is Altered, much of the didactic comment deals with friendship. There is little doubt that in his profound respect for the marriage bond Jonson shows something of his Catholic principles. He would never have approved the sympathetic portrayal of a false wife as in A Woman Killed with Kindness, or such a detailed presentation of incestuous desire as in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore.

His disapproval of sexual irregularities is stressed with more definite Catholic emphasis in Epigram LXII:

> Fine MADAME WOULD-BEE, wherefore should you feare,
> That love to make so well, a child to beare?
> The world reputes you barren: but I know
> Your 'pothecarie, and his drug sayes no.
> Is it the paine affrights? that's soone forgot.
> Or your complexions losse? you have a pot,
> That can restore that. Will it hurt your feature?
> To make amends, yo'are thought a wholesome creature.
> What should the cause be? Oh, you live at court:
> And there's both losse of time, and losse of sport
> In a great belly. Write, then on thy wombe,
> Of the not borne, yet buried, here's the tombe.

Certainly, it was the introduction of extraneous novelties and the preoccupation with illicit sexual relationships which he objected to in drama.

In protesting against the taste of the time, Jonson had as much to say against audiences as against writers. Obviously, there is a connection between the two types of

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[21] The New Inn, III, ii

protest, for if the audiences clamor for particular kinds of entertainment there is a temptation for the writers to work such entertainment into their plays.

There is, however, a bitterness in Jonson's references to the audiences of his time which casts doubt on his truthfulness. Considering the evident anger in his outbursts, the poet who himself confesses that *Sejanus* had been most unpopular may be suspected of retorting on an audience which frequently annoyed him by failing to perceive the glories of his work. As he launched his second tragedy, *Catiline*, he wrote to the "Reader in ordinarie":

> Though you commend the two firste Actes, with the people, because they are the worst; and dislike the Oration of *Cicero*, in regard you read some pieces of it, at Schoole, and understand them not yet.....
>
> The commendation of good things may fall within a many, their approbation but in a few; for the most commend out of affection, selfe tickling, and easinesse, or imitation.
>
> *Catiline*, Reader in Ordinarie, 6-9, 14-17*

In the Prologue for the Stage prefixed to *The Staple of News* Jonson asserts:

> If that not like you, that he sends to night,
> 'Tis you have left to judge, not hee to write.
>
> *The Staple of News*
> The Prologue for the Stage, 29-30

In the dedication to *The New Inn* he described the first day's audience:

> ...a hundred fastidious *impertinents*, who were there present the first day, yet never made piece of their prospect the right way. What

> did they come for, then? ... To see, and to bee seene. To make a generall muster of themselves in their clothes of credit: and possesse the Stage, against the Play. To dislike all, but marke nothing. And by their confidence of rising between the Actes, in oblique lines, make affidavit to the whole house, of their not understanding one Scene. ...as the Stage-furniture, or Arras-clothes, they were there, as spectators, away.
>
> The New Inn, Dedication, 5-18

How much personal resentment at the reception afforded his work entered into these admonitions is apparent in the complaints about misinterpretation of the poet's meaning. We have seen that clear personal references can be discerned in some of his sharp satire, and some of these references were shrewd and cutting enough to provoke strong resentment. Furthermore, having obtained a reputation for sharp satire, Jonson was frequently censured for personal references in his plays, and some of these censures seem wildly foolish, if not utterly malicious. Consider the attacks he suffered for three plays, and not the most offensive, with which he was involved. Speaking of the reception afforded Sejanus, the Oxford Editors say:

> Some individuals, too, of sufficient importance to make their resentment disagreeable to the dramatist, but branded as 'dull poet-haters' by his friends, insisted on discovering satirical implications. And it was no doubt hard to believe that the poet who had just used the Court of Augustus as a vehicle for unmeasured personal ridicule of his contemporaries, had portrayed the Court of Tiberius in the guileless spirit of a scholar bent only on the historical accuracy of his play.[22]

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22. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp.36-7

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>
> The New Inn, Dedication, 5-13

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>
> 22.

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22. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp.36-7

But more serious trouble befell him on the advent of the next play he was associated with, Eastward Ho:

> For some incidental satire upon the Scots, including an amusing but doubtless offensive caricature of James himself, Jonson 'was delated by Sir James Murray to the King ...' and voluntarily imprisoned himself with his two collaborators, who had apparently already been arrested. 23.

Whatever there was in the play to provoke such anger has been largely expunged in all surviving printed copies, and the Oxford Editors, in a careful discussion of the state of the text, indicate the extent and nature of the cancellations.[24] Even the Alchemist with its vast popularity and superiority to everything else of its type was not beyond the reach of spite. In "The Stage History of the Plays" Herford and Simpson state:

> ...apparently some personal satire was detected in it at first, and Herrick denounced:
>
> Such ignorance as theirs was, who once hist
> At thy unequal'd Play, the Alchymist:
> Oh fie upon 'em!
>
> 25.

Also, in the very beginning of his career, when he was an actor and was occasionally called upon to help revise or complete a play, Jonson was imprisoned for the ending he provided for The Isle of Dogs begun by Thomas Nashe and since lost.

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23. Ibid., p. 38
24. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 495-500
25. Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 223. The quotation from Herrick comes from 'Upon M. Ben. Jonson. Epig.' printed on page 150 of his Works, ed. Moorman.

The satirist therefore had grounds for anger at the reaction to his work, and in venting this anger he was just the man to give back more than he had received. Thus in the Introduction to Bartholomew Fair it is said:

> (there should not be allowed in the audience) any State-decipherer, or politique Picklocke of the Scene, so solemnly ridiculous, as to search out, who was meant by the Ginger-bread-woman, who by the Hobby-horse-man, who by the Costard-monger, nay, who by their Wares.
>
> Bartholomew Fair, Introduction, 137-41

In the play itself is the bitter remark:

> ...a wit is a dangerous thing, in this age...
>
> Ibid., I, v, 78-9

Some years earlier in a dedication which remains one of his longest and most cogent dissertations on his purpose and standards of judgement, he offered a more specific and less heated comment:

> And, howsoever I cannot escape, from some, the imputation of sharpnesse, but that they will say, I have taken a pride, or lust, to be bitter, and not my yongest infant but hath come into the world with all his teeth; I would aske of these supercilious politiques, what nation, societie, or generall order, or state I have provok'd? what publique person? whether I have not (in all these) preserv'd their dignitie, as mine owne person, safe? My workes are read, allow'd, (I speake of those that are entirely mine) looke into them: What broad reproofes have I us'd? Where have I beene particular? Where personall? except to a mimick, cheater, bawd, or buffon, creatures (for their insolencies) worthy to be tax'd?
>
> Volpone, Dedication, 47-58*

This innocent protest is amazing when we consider how unsparingly he pilloried Marston and Dekker in Poetaster.

He insists that the only public persons he has derided are: mimics, cheaters, bawds, and buffoons. Unless he wishes to rank Marston and Dekker in this group, how can he deny that his satire has transgressed the limits prescribed here? And in later plays he was to mock and roughly abuse such public persons as Nathaniel Butter and Inigo Jones. We have seen inconsistencies in Jonson before and are confronted with one more here. We may allow that he suffered unjust and unreasonable accusations, but in reacting to these charges he tried too hard to present a blameless record. There is no doubt that when his pride was offended and his temper raised, he sometimes indulged in wishful rather than logical thinking or tried to carry by vehement protest what could not be carried by reasoned argument.

In fairness to Jonson, one apparent contradiction in his statements at various times should be explained lest it be objected against him. One of his reactions to popular disapproval of his work was to declare that he cared not for vulgar applause. He made several statements in this vein. In a prologue he asserted:

> Nor hunts she (his muse) after popular applause...
> Cynthia's Revels, Prologue, 13

And in the play itself, Mercury says that Crites, who can be identified with Jonson, need not fear the resentment of the base courtiers when he discomfits them with

shrewd criticism, for:

> The better race in court
> That have the true nobilitie, call'd vertue,
> Will apprehend it, as a gratefull right
> Donne to their separate merit: and approve
> The fit rebuke of so ridiculous heads...
> Ibid., V, i, 30-4

In the revised conclusion affixed to the quarto editions of Every Man out of His Humour the quality of that play was announced:

> The Cates that you have tasted were not season'd
> For every vulgar Pallat, but prepar'd
> To banket pure and apprehensive eares...
> 10-12

However, Jonson seemed to have another idea as he wrote Epicoene. Perhaps his return to an English theme after his foreign and erudite excursions in Sejanus and Volpone prompted him to believe that this play, good as it was, would not incur the displeasure of even the crudest auditors. At any rate, he suggests a new attitude by insisting:

> Truth sayes, of old, the art of making plaies
> Was to content the people: & their praise
> Was to the Poet money, wine and bayes.
> But in this age, a sect of writers are,
> That, onely, for particular likings care,
> And will taste nothing that is populare.
> With such we mingle neither braines, nor brests;
> Our wishes, like to those (make publique feasts)
> Are not to please the cookes tastes, but the guests.
> Epicoene, Prologue, 1-9

This seeming reversal of opinion is explained by the context of the statement. In the last line, "the cookes tastes, but the guests", is borrowed from Martial. In

identifying the source of the remark the Oxford Editors add, "So Martial replies to a fastidious critic."[26] Jonson certainly seems to have fastidious critics in mind as he continues:

> Yet, if those cunning palates hether come,
> They shall find guests entreaty, and good roome;
> And though all relish not, sure, there will be some,
> That, when they leave their seates, shall make 'hem say,
> Who wrote that piece, could so have wrote a play:
> But that, he knew, this was the better way.
> For, to present all custard, or all tart,
> And have no other meats, to beare a part,
> Or to want bread, and salt, were but course art.
> The Poet prayes you then, with better thought
> To sit; and, when his cates are all in brought,
> Though there be none far fet, there will be deare-bought
> Be fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, squires,
> Some for your waiting wench, and citie-wires,
> Some for your men, and daughters of white-Friars.
>
> Ibid., 10-24

It is obvious that he is defending the range and type of material in the play, and the only circumstance which suggests it might require a defence is the fact that Jonson is lowering his vein from Roman tragedy and literate comedy to a more commonplace subject and setting. It is the transition from Sejanus and Volpone to Epicoene which produces this attitude. Indeed, we may even include Poetaster in the list of more aristocratic predecessors.

Epicoene was probably finished in 1609 and the statements quoted from the prologue would date from that year. The Alchemist was first printed in 1612, and at that time had the address "To the Reader" prefaced to it. Thus,

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[26] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. X, p.3

within three years of insisting that he did not write merely for the cultured few Jonson was again saying:

> If thou beest more, thou art an Understander,
> and then I trust thee.
>
> The Alchemist, To the Reader, 1-2*

The address goes on to protest:

> ...the Concupiscence of Daunces, and Antickes so raigneth, as to runne away from Nature, and be afraid of her, is the onely point of art that tickles the Spectators.
>
> Ibid., 6-8*

Obviously, the last statement falls into the category of protests against the taste of the time. We may conclude that Jonson held a constant contempt for the inclusion of extraneous diversions in plays and quite consciously set himself to writing plays not designed to satisfy the popular hunger for such things. At the time of writing Epicoene he felt that he was moving away from a restricted and erudite type of drama to a play of a more homely nature. He was correct in believing that he was writing a play more suited to the popular taste than its immediate predecessors. His statement in the prologue is a defence of his change to a more familiar setting and certainly not a confession that he was going to indulge in those diversions he elsewhere proscribed. His arguments in the Induction to Bartholomew Fair are the best evidence that he could treat a commonplace subject without becoming merely vulgar. It is the wording of the de-

fence, wording which does seem to suggest relaxing of his principles, which leads to an apparent contradiction. There is really no contradiction. Epicoene may be a play which the goundlings could enjoy, but it is still a carefully constructed drama into which no irrelevant entertainment has been introduced.

D. The Observance of the Classical Unities

Jonson's ideas concerning the arrangement and structure of plays were no less intense than his views on the language and material that should be used. He was a careful student of classic example in the structure of plays. Even in his first play, which is a good deal less than great drama, there are sound qualities which reflect the application of certain literary principles. The plot of The Case is Altered is an amalgam of borrowings with some heightening of characterization and some structural changes as compared to its classical models. Though it is a far cry from the masterful technique of The Alchemist, it still shows Jonson's faith in the classical ideals of unity. It is certainly true that the action in The Case is Altered is localized and the time of the action is kept to a matter of weeks by having characters relate such earlier events as Jaques' theft of his master's gold and child.

In the prologue to the 1616 Folio version of _Every Man in His Humour_, he had reached the point of chiding Shakespeare while insisting on the importance of observing the unities of time and place and of limiting the action to those things which can be adequately represented on the stage:

> ...he himselfe must justly hate.
> To make a child, now swadled, to proceede
> Man, and then shoote up, in one beard, and weede,
> Past threescore yeeres: or, with three rustie swords,
> And helpe of some few foot-and-halfe-foot words,
> Fight over _Yorke_, and _Lancasters_ long jarres:
> And in the tyring-house bring wounds, to scarres.
> He rather prayes, you will be pleas'd to see
> One such, to day, as other playes should be.
> Where neither _Chorus_ wafts you ore the seas;
> Nor creaking throne comes downe, the boyes to please;
> Nor nimble squibbe is seene, to make afear'd
> The gentlewomen; nor roul'd bullet heard
> To say, it thunders; nor tempestuous drumme
> Rumbles, to tell you when the storme doth come;
> But deedes, and language, such as men doe use...
> _Every Man in His Humour_ (1616 Folio)
> Prologue, 6-21

Admittedly, Jonson's insistence upon the observance of the unities has not stood the test of time. The range of the modern movie camera and the technical resources available to the present day producer obviate the charge that a battle or a storm cannot be made convincing. Even in Jonson's time Shakespeare was, in _King Lear_, to make the rage of the elements a splendid complement to the rage of an abused man. We should not happily relinquish these scenes out of deference to any classical theory. Therefore, we must hold that Jonson was too much a re-

specter of this one ancient theory. He respected the unities of time, place, and action too much because his ideas of drama were themselves too restricted. His attempts to restrict the time and place of the play are more obnoxious than his insistence on unity of action, but the value he placed on all three unities can only be understood if we realize why his idea of drama was so restricted.

Jonson's theory of drama was limited in scope for the same reason that his supremacy in drama was attained only in the genre of satire. Though Jonson never suggests that he recognizes any deficiency in his powers, it is certainly true that few writers have ever evolved a technique more fully and minutely fitted to their particular gifts. As he wrote for the Elizabethan stage, Jonson had always the touchstone of demonstrative public reaction to his work as well as the criticism of players and managers to guide him. No doubt he was also called upon to defend his practices during drinking bouts at the Mermaid. In short, he was no cloistered literary theorist but a practicing dramatist who had to succeed or starve. The simple fact is that though he espoused literary theories quite alien to the unfettered and fluid stage of Elizabethan England, though he often denounced the general tendencies of the theatre in his time, though he derided the popular

approval of the ranting strain of Kyd and sometimes set himself to write erudite drama supposed to please a select audience, still, his finest plays in point of technique were also the most popular. What he therefore succeeded in doing was to develop a form of drama which perfectly suited the particular qualities of his genius. It is inconceivable that he should have achieved such a splendid matching of method and ability without having a clear conception of his own abilities and disabilities.

It was the technique of satire which he perfected and which made him famous, and it is readily to be seen that the theories of drama which he endorsed were particularly suited to satire. Restriction of the place and time of action, for example, can heighten the effect of ridiculous situations and humorous plot twists. The rapid manipulations of Face, Subtle, and Doll as they vary their routine to bilk the victims who hurry to their premises serve to emphasize the gullibility of the dupes. With a series of skillful lies one dupe is played against another until the plots and counter-plots have multiplied most amazingly, and in the end, Face plays his master against Subtle and Doll. The contrast of one victim to another which is obtained by bringing them into the action barely seconds apart, by actually having them work out their conflicting purposes simultaneously, is part of the humor.

Like the fast-paced patter of a good comedian, it keeps the audience attentive and gives no respite or time for dissatisfaction. The rapidly developed complications of the plot command the attention and delight of the auditors as readily as the surprise ending of a good joke does. The breathless pace of such a play as The Alchemist, the delightful multiplication of plot and counter-plot can serve the ends of satire but not the ends of tragedy.

In tragedy we only need to understand the feelings of one or a few characters, but we must understand those feelings well and if necessary must see the principal character in a variety of situations. Our curiosity concerning the prophecy of the coming of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane is not essential to the success of Macbeth; what is essential is that we have time to see the effect of Duncan's murder on Macbeth and his lady. The sight of Lady Macbeth trying to wash her hands is engrossing not merely because it is well written or comes as the climax to a series of skillfully connected incidents but because it helps us to understand what is happening to the woman herself. Of course, Shakespeare did not write formless psychological dramas, but it is true that the action of King Lear can be delayed while the mind of the old king is opened to us.

The action of The Alchemist, Volpone and Epicoene

must be compact and rapid if maximum pleasure is to be had from these plays. In Volpone, for example, the swift traffic of captatores, each quickly and simply revealed to us with his greediness viciously emphasized, demonstrates their ridiculousness. One captatore carefully and completely displayed could provide a psychological drama, a study of greed; three of them hurrying to Volpone could be ridiculously funny, or, as in Jonson's treatment of them, mordantly humorous.[27]

We must conclude that Jonson understood his peculiar abilities could best serve his didactic purpose through the medium of satire. On at least two occasions he set himself to write tragedies, but in the main, he gave himself to satire. Significantly, his two extant tragedies have Roman settings, are motivated by the political ambitions of unscrupulous men, and are in other respects much alike. There is no sign that he experimented in

27. Nash, R., "The Comic Intent of Volpone," Studies in Philology, Vol. XLIV, pp. 26-40. Nash's argument that Jonson intended Volpone to be more comical than most later critics have found it is plausible. There is no doubt that Jonson intended it to be comical, and Herford's conclusion: "of the proper and normal material of comedy, extravagancies and absurdities, there is, in the main plot, nothing," is rightly objected to by Nash. However, to admit that Jonson intended the play to be purely comic is not to agree that he succeeded in his intention. Volpone's attempt to possess Celia and the treatment of Bonario are not comical because Volpone and Mosca have proven themselves shrewd enough to perpetrate these crimes. They are not fools who appear ridiculous in attempting a dangerous scheme; they are cunning men who may succeed. There is also something sad in the spectacle of two men as able as Mosca and Volpone entangling themselves in a vicious and disastrous plot.

tragedy as he did in satire. He certainly did not persist in trying to write plays which would conform to his conception of tragedy. In spite of his dissatisfaction with the reception of Poetaster, for example, he wrote only one tragedy, Sejanus, before resuming work in satire. The fact that comparatively little of his time was spent trying to write tragedies further suggests that he knew his limitations.

However, Jonson's success in developing a brilliant satiric technique is no excuse for his attempt to judge other types of drama by the standards of satire. Why should we expect tragedies or historical plays to conform to the standards which are particularly relevant to satire? If Jonson could have understood other writers and other forms of drama as well as he understood himself and the qualities of satire, his criticism would be more consistent. In particular, he would have realized that the portions of classic literary theory which applied perfectly to his own work were not as well suited to the work of Shakespeare. He might then have avoided the error of defending his right to alter classical theory to fit his needs while at the same time requesting his contemporaries to accept without question the portions of classical theory that he approved.

With all his respect for the ancients, it is yet

true that his wide reading in Latin and Greek made Jonson their heir, not their slave. His own brilliance made him more than an imitator of the Greeks and Romans, because he used these literary resources with taste and originality. In his riper years he summed up his attitude toward the writers of antiquity:

> I know Nothing can conduce more to letters, then to examine the writings of the Ancients, and not to rest in their sole Authority, or take all upon trust from them; provided the plagues of Judging, and Pronouncing against them, be away; such as are envy, bitternesse, precipitation, impudence, and scurrile scoffing. For to all the observations of the Ancients, wee have our owne experience: which, if we will use, and apply, wee have better meanes to pronounce.
>
> Discoveries. 129-37

A statement in the introduction to Every Man out of His Humour clearly shows that at the beginning of his career Jonson was trying to use, rather than merely observe, the dicta of classical writers. Mitis and Cordatus discuss whether the play follows the rules of comedy.

> Mitis. Does he observe all the lawes of Comedie in it?
> Cordatus. What lawes mean you?
> Mitis. Why, the equall division of it into Acts, and Scenes, according to the Terentian manner, his true number of Actors; the furnishing of the Scene with GREX, or CHORUS, and that the whole Argument fall within compasse of a dayes businesse.
> Cordatus. O no, these are too nice observations.
> Mitis. They are such as must be received, by your favour, or it cannot be authentique.
> Cordatus. Troth, I can discerne no such necessity.
> Mitis. No?
> Cordatus. No, I assure you, Signior. If those lawes you speake of, had beene delivered us, ab initio, and in their present vertue and perfection,

> there had beene some reason of obeying their powers: but 'tis extant, that that which we call Comoedia, was at first nothing but a simple, and continued Song, sung by one only person, till SUSARIO invented a second, after him EPICHARMUS a third; PHORMUS, and CHIONIDES devised to have foure Actors, with a Prologue and Chorus; to which CRATINUS (long after) added a fift, and sixt; EUPOLIS more; ARISTOPHANES more then they: every man in the dignities of his spirit and judgement, supplyed something. And (though that in him this kinde of Poeme appeared absolute, and fully perfected) yet how is the face of it changed since, in MENANDER, PHILEMON, CECILIUS, PLAUTUS, and the rest; who have utterly excluded the Chorus, altered the property of the persons, their names, and natures, and augmented it with all liberty, according to the elegancie and disposition of those times, wherein they wrote? I see not then, but we should enjoy the same licence, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did; and not bee tyed to those strict and regular formes, which the nicenesse of a few (who are nothing but forme) would thrust upon us.
> Every Man out of His Humour, Introduction, 235-70

This swift excusion in the history of comedy is indicative of the man whom the great classicist of the next generation was to compliment for his "learned Sock".[28]

The inconsistency previously noted in Jonson's attempt to bind other writers to certain ancient precepts while retaining for himself the right to innovate is painfully apparent in this introduction. Later, in this very passage in which he defends his right to innovate, he takes another fling at writers who do not confine the scene of their plays:

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28. Milton, John, L'Allegro, l. 132

> Mitis. No? how comes it then, that in some one Play we see so many seas, countries, and kingdomes, past over with such admirable dexteritie?
> Cordatus. O, that but shewes how well the Authors can travaile in their vocation, and out-run the apprehension of their auditorie.
> Ibid., 281-6

On this matter Jonson was ever adamant, and though he defended his own variations of classic procedure he would not agree to other writers desires to shift the scene of the action. He was consistent insofar as he always tried to observe the principles of unity of place and unity of time, doing so to perfection in The Alchemist, and nearly to perfection in Volpone, Epicoene, and Bartholomew Fair. But though the satirist could work out his themes in plays of severely restricted time and locale, this is no reason to insist that the writers of historical plays should do the same. It is not at all consistent to argue:

> (Is it not true the ancients thus) altered the property of the persons, their names, and natures, and augmented it with all liberty, according to the elegancie and disposition of those times wherein they wrote? I see not then, but we should enjoy the same license, or free power....
> Every Man out of His Humour, Introduction, 263-7

And argue again:

> Boy. Yes, if the nature of a Clock were to speake, not strike. So, if a Child could be borne, in a Play, and grow up to a man, i' the first Scene, before hee went off the stage: and then after to come forth a Squire, and bee made a Knight: and that Knight to travell betweene the Acts, and doe wonders i' the holy

> land, or else where; kill Paynims, wild Boores, dun Cowes, and other Monsters; beget him a reputation, and marry an Emperours Daughter for his Mistris; convert her Fathers Countrey; and at last come home, lame, and all to be laden with miracles.
>
> Damplay. These miracles would please, I assure you: and take the *People*! For there be of the People, that will expect miracles, and more then miracles from this Pen.
>
> *The Magnetic Lady*, I, Chorus, 15-27

The inconsistency lies in Jonson's refusal to allow others to evade the classical unities while he himself evades or alters many particulars of ancient theory.

There can be no question that the work of Shakespeare was clearly, if not predominantly, in Jonson's mind as he wrote the last-quoted passage. Another protest against unusual characters in plays is more obviously directed at Shakespeare as it is argued that no one should feel cheated, if, because Jonson's play is true to life,

> ...there bee never a *Servant-monster* i' the *Fayre*; who can helpe it? he sayes; nor a nest of *Antiques*? Hee is loth to make Nature afraid in his *Playes*, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*, to mixe his head with other mens heeles, let the concupisence of *Jigges* and *Dances*, raigne as strong as it will amongst you...
>
> *Bartholomew Fair*, Induction, 127-32

Jonson's dramatic scope was too narrow to enable him to sympathize with the attitude of his greater contemporary. While his strictures against introducing extra matter into plays merely for the amusement of the groundlings are justified, he failed to understand that a type of drama much different from his own could not be limited

by the restrictions of his own finely wrought work. There is good reason for deprecating such devices for drawing a crowd as he has Love-Wit describe:

> Sure he has got
> Some bawdy pictures, to call all this ging;
> The Frier, and the Nun; or the new Motion
> Of the Knights courser, covering the Parsons mare;
> The Boy of six yeere old, with the great thing:
> Or't may be, he has the Fleas that runne at tilt,
> Upon a table, or some Dog to daunce?
> The Alchemist, V, i, 20-6

But not all things which differed from his conception of proper dramatic technique are so vulgar. This failure to allow at least one other great writer the license which he claimed for himself was evident throughout his career. In The Staple of News is a gibe at Shakespeare's company, and the gibe is not tempered by the fact that the King's Men produced many of Jonson's plays:

> There is a Legacy left to the Kings Players,
> Both for their various shifting of their Scene,
> And dex-trous change o' their persons to all shapes,
> And all disguises....
> The Staple of News, III, ii, 201-4

Jonson is here definitely referring to the shifting of the scene of action and not to the change of scenery. Even in a Roman tragedy, which was a serious exercise in scholarship as well as a drama, he could interject a comment on shifts of scene:

> ... and will as soone,
> When things succeed, be throwne by, or let fall,
> As is a vaile put off, a visor chang'd,
> Or the scene shifted, in our theatres....
> Catiline, I, 182-5

Quotations expressing the same criticisms have previously been extracted from such early plays as Every Man in His Humour, which reaffirms the conclusion that this inconsistency was prevelant during most of his career.

E. His Judgement of Shakespeare

We have now reviewed a small portion of Jonson's literary criticism and have taken examples from work of widely separated times so it is now possible to make some general statements about his literary criticism. Such statements will provide a good base from which to begin the survey of some less happy aspects of his criticism of literature. Perhaps the most striking thing about Jonson's criticism is the little change it underwent during his lifetime. His basic principles of judgement were clearly established by the time of writing of his third surviving play and were the principles which he was to expound in Discoveries in the third decade of the Seventeenth Century. It must be admitted that Jonson's own plays did not always demonstrate his principles very well, but, surely, it is one thing to establish ideals and another to realize them. The growth of Jonson was a growth towards mastery of the dramatic theories which he had accepted early in his career.

As we realize the high degree of correspondence be-

tween his earliest and latest pronouncements on dramatic technique, we must also realize one of the limitations of the man. Jonson was a great playwright only in the satiric vein. His attempts at tragedy display a vast erudition and meticulous blending of history and drama, but he is still only a satirist trying to write tragedy. Admittedly, in following the Senecan concept of tragedy in Sejanus and to a lesser extent in Catiline, he was working in a vein so alien to that of Shakespeare that comparison is difficult, but Shakespeare must still be our standard for judging English tragic drama.

However, the very difference in their two concepts of tragedy points to an important difference between the dramatists themselves and emphasizes one of Jonson's limitations. One feels that Shakespeare felt some pity for the human weaknesses he described. One can not imagine that he wrote of the young princes in the tower, of Lear, or of Othello without actually feeling some of their pain, anxiety, or anger. In all of Jonson's plays there is not one character sympathetically described. There is admiration for Crites and Horace, but it is cold and intellectual beside the warmth of Shakespeare's feeling. Jonson was by nature a satirist. Out of that limited nature a limited concept of drama quickly developed. Working to satisfy the demands of this concept, he proved himself the

greatest master of satiric drama in English. Just as his dramatic accomplishments are memorable only in satire, so his dramatic theory was restricted to the purposes of satire. It is easy to detect the similarity between Jonson's arguments for unity of action by restriction of the scene and time of the action and Dryden's insistence that "(satire) ought only to treat of one subject; to be confined to one particular theme."[29.] Jonson understood satire thoroughly, but the plays which fell outside the realm of satire were not entirely to his liking.

A corollary to these rapidly developed but limited theories of drama is Jonson's development as a dramatist. His growth in dramatic skill is always in the form of a nearer approach to his ideals. There is no changing of the ideals themselves, for he was always trying to be an instructor of men, his writing was always didactic, and satire was his usual and his finest medium. There can be no attempt to distinguish periods in his career as critics ~~may~~ have tried to do with the career of Shakespeare. Although we cannot neatly pigeonhole all of Shakespeare's plays and say that each one marks a stage of his development during a period when he was pursuing the comic, historic, or tragic vein, still, we must admit that

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29. Dryden, John, The Original and Progress of Satire

throughout his career there were shifts in interest. The effects he strove for in _Henry V_ were not those he worked for in _Hamlet_. He is a man of completely different moods in _Othello_ and _A Midsummer Night's Dream_, or even in _Othello_ and _Romeo and Juliet_. In writing at least three separate types of plays and in producing widely differing plays of each type, Shakespeare shows a range of power and an exploration of dramatic technique inestimably wider than the ability and technique of Jonson. In sum, if Shakespeare's accomplishment is a tribute to the vastness of the human spirit, Jonson's accomplishment is a tribute to the persistence of the specialist.

Happily, the fundamental good sense of Jonson and his true feeling for poetry are demonstrated by the fact that he perceived the greatness of Shakespeare despite the divergence of their geniuses. Shakespeare was by no means without recognition is his own day. His financial success proves that the public at large and producers such as Henslowe and James and Richard Burbage valued his work. By 1598 Francis Meres was willing to say of him:

> As the soule of _Euphorbus_ was thought to live in _Pythagoras_: so the sweete wittie soule of _Ovid_ lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued _Shakespeare_...
>
> As _Plautus_ and _Seneca_ are accounted the best

> for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among ye English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage.

30.

There is no analysis or critical evaluation in this acceptance and praise of his work. The comment in Discoveries is much more judicious:

> I remember, the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing, (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, Would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor, (for I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.) Hee was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent Phantsie; brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein hee flow'd with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd: Sufflaminandus erat; as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: As when hee said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him; Caesar, thou dost me wrong. Hee replyed: Caesar did never wrong, but with just cause: and such like; which were ridiculous. But hee redeemed his vices, with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned.
>
> Discoveries, 647-68

The context of the passage leaves no doubt it was written after Shakespeare's death, and if the dates of composition of Discoveries suggested by the Oxford Editors are correct, it was written after 1623. We need have no

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30. Quoted in Neilson and Hill, Shakespeare, Houghton Mifflin Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1942, p. xi

fear that Jonson's praise is merely the result of mellowing old age. If anything, Jonson became more bitter with age, which makes such praise the more significant.

It is interesting to set beside this passage some excepts from the eulogy on Shakespeare:

> ...I will not lodge thee by
> *Chaucer*, or *Spenser*, or bid *Beaumont* lye
> A little further, to make thee a roome:
> ...
> And tell, how farre thou didst our *Lily* out-shine,
> Or sporting *Kid*, or *Marlowes* mighty line.
> And though thou hadst small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*,
> From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
> For names; but call forth thund'ring *AEschilus*,
> *Euripides*, and *Sophocles* to us...
> Or, when thy Sockes were on,
> Leave thee alone, for the comparison
> Of all, that insolent *Greece*, or haughtie *Rome*
> Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
> ...
> He was not of an age, but for all time!
> ...
> Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
> My gentle *Shakespeare*, must enjoy a part.
> For though the *Poets* matter, Nature be,
> His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muses anvile: turn the same,
> (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
> Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
> For a good *Poet's* made, as well as borne.
>
> ...*Shakespeares* minde, and manners brightly shines
> In his well torned, and true-filed lines....

19-21, *Ungathered Verse*, XXVI
29-33, 37-40, 43, 55-64, 67-8

One suspects some conventional eulogizing here and wonders if Jonson would really be willing to set Shakespeare with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. His comment

on Shakespeare's art, for example, is in direct contrast to his remark to Drummond:

> Shaksperr wanted Arte.
>
> *Conversations*, 50

The interesting thing is that even in such a eulogy Jonson would draw attention to Shakespeare's limited knowledge of Latin and Greek. The great classicist could not forget, even while singing a pean of praise, that learning was essential to great writing. It is a great concession for him to allow that with "small *Latine* and lesse *Greeke*" Shakespeare was still a master of his craft. And again we see Jonson's faith in intellectual endeavour when he insists:

> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the *Muses* anvile....

Who can deny that the growth in technique and poetic power from *The Comedy of Errors* to *Othello* proves that Shakespeare must have worked? Though his reading and study did not obtrude as did Jonson's, though he obviously did not have such an understanding of ancient history and literature as did Jonson, though Jonson wished he had blotted a thousand lines and protested that the rule of his wit was not in his power, can anyone deny that practice and close observation were essential to his development? Praise is due Jonson because however much he may have believed that Shakespeare fell short of the classic ideal, he did not deny his great-

ness nor his devotion to his art.

What is most regrettable about Jonson's criticism of Shakespeare is that there is so little of it. We could wish that such a critic as Bradly might have had Jonson's opportunity of knowing Shakespeare. However, we must remember, to Jonson's credit, that his brief comments, and particularly, his theoretical assertions begin non-"classical" criticism in English. Jonson made important innovations in classical theory and applied the resultant criteria to the judgement of contemporary work. If Jonson's examination of the work of his contemporaries is patchy and always scanty, it is yet true that he was the first to attempt any such examination. Not until we come to Dryden's examination of _The Silent Woman_ do we find analyses of contemporary writing more intensive than those of Jonson. Moreover, the vehicles of expression used by Jonson are basically the same as those used by Dryden. The _Essay of Dramatic Poesy_, for example, is a discourse involving four persons and is not fundamentally different from such ~~a~~ discourse as that between Lovel and the Host in _The New Inn_. Jonson also anticipated Dryden in the use of prologues as critical media. Dryden and later critics have superseded Jonson, and the development of the periodical press has afforded

new opportunities for the critic, but Jonson was first in the field.

F. His Judgement of other Contemporaries

There is not in the plays a great deal of direct criticism of other writers of the time. There are numerous allusions to books, poems, plays, and authors, but can we accept a swift glance at a contemporary writer or work as criticism? No doubt such glances give us an indication of Jonson's attitude, but of what value are they without supporting arguments or specific references? Thus, when Puntvarolo salutes Carlo Buffone as: "Thou grand scourge; or, second _untrusse_ of the time," it is a reference to Marston's _The Scourge of Villanie_ and to Munday's "ballet of untrusse".[31] That the reference is deprecatory is certain when it is recalled that as well as being condemned by the other characters, Buffone is described in the list of characters as:

> A Publicke, scurrilous, and prophane Jester; that (more swift then _Circe_) with absurd _simile's_ will transforme any person into deformity.
> _Every Man out of His Humour_, persons of the play, 25-7 *

But there is no analysis of the work referred to; there is only the definite statement that Jonson regarded it as a scurvy piece of work. In discussing

[31] Herford and Simpson, _Op. cit._, Vol. IV, p. 436 cf. _Poetaster_, V, iii, 605

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> (*Every Man Out of His Humour*, persons of the Play, 36.)

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[31] Herford and Simpson, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 436
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Jonson's analysis of language, attention was drawn to his criticism of Marston's vocabulary and use of words. Though some of the judgements noted were not fully justified, Jonson's examination of Marston's words and phrases is his most carefully substantiated critical reference to that writer. For the most part, Jonson's observations on his contemporaries are disappointingly uninformative.

Typical of his blunt denunciations is his dismissal of *The Spanish Tragedy* when he condemns the judgement of some playgoers:

> Hee that will sweare, *Jeronimo*, or *Andronicus* are the best playes, yet, shall passe unexcepted at, heere, as a man whose Judgement shewes it is constant, and hath stood still, these five and twentie, or thirtie yeeres. Though it be an *Ignorance*, it is a vertuous and stay'd ignorance....[32]
>
> *Bartholomew Fair*, Introduction, 106-10

Also, in the Induction to *Cynthia's Revels*, it is stated that an auditor with "more beard then braine" will insist:

> That the old Hieronimo, (*as it was first acted*) was the onely best, and judiciously pend play of Europe.
>
> *Cynthia's Revels*, Induction, 209-11*

And in *Poetaster* lines modelled on a speech in *The Spanish Tragedy* are admired by the derided Demetrius.[33]

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[32] Ridiculous characters utter bits of the play: *The New Inn*, II, v, 82; II, vi, 4; *The Staple of News*, I, iv, 17

[33] *Poetaster*, III, iv, 215-22

In discussing Jonson's rational analysis of language, we also noted that two ridiculous characters modelled their foolish expressions on speeches of The Spanish Tragedy.

Aside from the observations on Shakespeare, Jonson scarcely refers to any other great writers of the period. Marlowe, for example, is referred to in only one play, and then without comment.[34.] In *Discoveries* he is tersely condemned:

> And though his (a true articifer's) language differ from the vulgar somewhat; it shall not fly from all humanity, with the *Tamerlanes*.... which had nothing in them but the *scenicall* strutting, and furious vociferation....
> *Discoveries*, 775-9

More just is the comment in the memorial lines on Shakespeare:

> ...or *Marlowes* mighty line.
> *Ungathered Verse*, XXVI, 30

The Oxford Editors, in discussing the mention of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe in this poem remark:

> This grouping of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe is significant. They are precisely the three dramatic predecessors of Shakespeare who influenced his literary development. ... ~~and~~ the tribute to '*Marlowes* mighty line' is Jonson's finest single touch of criticism.[35.]

What strain is involved in picking criticism of a certain type out of a mass of material not primarily designed to offer that type of criticism. Three words

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[34.] *Every Man in His Humour*, III, iv, 60-4

[35.] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, vol. XI, p. 145

pass as "Jonson's finest single touch of criticism," and his two comments on Marlowe sum that writer up as a poet of great power who suffered from a great lack of restraint. Jonson is considerably less kind than the majority of modern critics.

At the end of a list of men not primarily connected with literature, Jonson devotes a passage of high praise to Bacon:

> But I have, and doe reverence him for the greatnesse, that was onely proper to himselfe, in that hee seem'd to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had beene in many Ages.
> *Discoveries*, 939-43

But for some slight references to Bacon's learning, Jonson's unstinting praise of him is supported by no analyses or specific references.

Jonson refers to Samuel Daniel seven times, and all we can be sure of is that he disliked Daniel's phrase:

> Sweet silent rethorique of perswading eyes;
> Dombe eloquence, whose powre doth move the blood....
> *The Complaint of Rosamund*, stanza XIX

We also learn that he condemned his extensive use of "Ah" and "O" in *Hymen's Triumph*.[36] The phrase quoted above is imitated twice,[37] and one imitation comes from

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[36] *Ibid*., vol. X, p. 365

[37] *The Staple of News*, III, ii, 271-2; *Every Man out of His Humour*, III, iii, 24-5

the mouth of a derided character, Fastidius Briske, while the other is scornfully applied to the gestures of Fitton. Jonson seems to have taken considerable exception to a modest phrase. It is in The Sad Shepherd, the fragmentary and surprisingly pleasant excursion in pastoral poetry made in his last days, that Jonson glanced at Daniel's overuse of exclamations:

> But that no stile for Pastorall should goe
> Current, but what is stamp'd with Ah, and O....
> The Sad Shepherd, Prologue, 53-4

This criticism is valid, but not brilliant. Three of the other references to Daniel are mere mentions of his "Delia",[38] while the other reference to him was noted by Drummond:

> Sammuel Daniel was a good honest
> Man, had no children, but no poet.
> Conversations, 23-4

These derisive references to Daniel do Jonson no credit, for Daniel was a poet of honest, independent temper. Esther Cloudmann Dunn quotes Daniel:

> Methinks we should not so soon yield our consents captive to the authority of antiquity, unless we saw more reason: all our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of nature as well as they....

She then adds this explanation of his attitude:

[38] Every Man in His Humour, V, iii, 284-7; Cynthia's Revels, IV, i, 33-4; Bartholomew Fair, V, iv, 69

> He sees the folly of attempting in English, classical metres which are based on quantity, instead of using the system of accent and rhyming which naturally belongs to the language.

And she finally appraises Jonson's attitude towards him:

> This upstanding Englishman and admirably consistent artist should have commanded Jonson's respect and admiration, in an age when insincerity and superficiality were all too common in poetry: but Jonson failed to see his good qualities.[39]

Robert Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit" is passed off as a book to be used in case of sickness as a sedative.[40] Two references to the dramatist, Richard Brome, occur in the Induction to Bartholomew Fair (ll. 7-8) and in poem XXXVIII in the Ungathered Verse.

Two very minor writers, Broughton and Coryat, are derided on several occasions. Broughton, a Puritan, is represented as a writer of strange and fantastic works. In The Alchemist Face says of Doll:

> ...shee is a most rare schollar;
> And is gone mad, with studying BRAUGHTONS works.
> The Alchemist, II, iii, 237-8

Later, while pretending to have a fit, Doll quotes from Broughton, and there is no doubt he is given to a fantastic interpretation of Biblical history.[41] Obviously,

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39. Dunn, E. C., Op. cit., pp. 86-7
40. Epicoene, IV, iv, 108-9, 124-5
41. The Alchemist, IV, v, 1-32; cf. Volpone, II, ii, 118-9

Jonson did not mention Broughton because he thought his work important. Possibly Jonson was eager to ridicule any readily vulnerable Puritan writer, and it may also be that he felt such extravagant writing was ideal material for such a fraudulent creature as Doll to dabble with.

While conversing with Drummond, Jonson offered several comments on Donne. He was not pleased by Donne's metrics, but he discerned the quality of the man's thought as he declared:

> Done for not keeping of accent deserved hanging.
> ...he esteemeth John Done the first poet in
> the World in some things....
> Conversations, 48-9, 117-8

His judgement was again acute if rather too extreme when he said:

> Done himself for not being understood would perish.
> Ibid., 196

[42] Coryat, a minor writer, was mockingly dismissed.

In a few brief references Jonson displays distaste for some romances popular in his time:

> He had no Arthurs, nor no Rosicleer's,
> No Knights o'the Sunne, nor Amadis de Gaule's
> Primalions, and Pantagruel's publique Nothings
> Abortives of the fabulous, darke cloyster,
> Sent out to poison courts, and infest manners.
> The New Inn, I, vi, 124-8

Don Quixote and The Mirror of Knighthood are glanced at elsewhere,[43] but all these references to romances tell us nothing more than that Jonson disliked them. It is

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[42] Bartholomew Fair, III, iv, 126 and III, v, 231; Love Restored, 85-6; Epigram cxxix, 17; Underwood xiii, 128; Ungathered Verse, x, xi

[43] The Alchemist, I, i, 174-5 and IV, vii, 40-1; Every Man out of His Humour, II, iii, 67-8; Cynthia's

surprising that Jonson failed to be impressed by the satiric import of even _Don Quixote_ and _Pantagruel_, and we can only surmise that the indecorum of these works annoyed him. Certainly, any overtones of courtly love in the romances would have incensed Jonson as the substitution of a fatuous diversion for the reality of true love. That Jonson, as a realistic satirist, would object to the fantastic exaggerations of the romances is also very likely.

Jonson's remarks on one other writer are worth noting. He has high praise for Lady Mary La Worth, particularly in one poem where he says:

> Since I exscribe your Sonnets, am become
> A better lover, and much better Poet.
> _Underwood_, xxviii, 3-4

He also dedicated _The Alchemist_ to her with a most flattering address and praised her beauty, particularly in _Epigrams_ ciii and cv. Reference is also made to her in _Conversations_ (ll. 355-6) and in _The Forest_ iii. At various times Jonson enjoyed the hospitality of Lady La Worth and her husband, and it would seem he more than repays her kindness. To say that copying her sonnets made him a better poet is too fulsome to be credible. We may suspect that a man who knew something of compliments to great persons was repaying another kindness

Revels, III, v, 30-33; _Epicoene_, IV, i, 56; _Every Man in His Humour_, II, ii, 25; _Underwood_, xlii, 29-31

done him rather than truly appraising her work.

At the beginning of this survey of Jonson's literary criticism it was stated that he applied a rational analysis to language. A close examination of his critical comments shows that he does not often make a close analysis of the style of his contemporaries but has done so often enough to make such examinations the best part--albeit far from perfect--of his criticism. He seldom discusses the purposes of other writers and then only superficially so that this phase of his criticism remains largely a theoretical assertion except as he applied it to his own work.

However, slight as Jonson's criticism appears when ranked beside the reams of modern criticism, its value is still great because it is the first criticism shaped to the conditions and needs of the English stage. To be the Critic in an age of great literary activity is no small accomplishment.

G. The Stage Quarrel

It is fitting to end the survey of Jonson's critical opinions by considering his outbursts during the "stage quarrel". These outbursts show the critic at his best as he pounces on the verbal faults of Marston and at his worst when he sinks to mere vituperation.

It is beside the purpose to engage here in a thorough discussion of the causes and origins of the quarrel. Marston and Dekker felt that Jonson had gone out of his way to attack them, while Jonson insisted that he had never dealt seriously with them until writing Poetaster, and then only because they had previously goaded him. Whose pride sustained the first word-provoking wound is a moot point. A comment by the Oxford Editors is worth noting:

> After a full weighing of the evidence, the general conclusion is that in this play (Every Man out of His Humour) Jonson did not use his carefully drawn representations of the humours to screen a series of personal attacks; that in Cynthia's Revels he did introduce lightly touched sketches of Dekker and Marston, indicated by a few satiric strokes only, which were clear at least to Dekker; and that it was not till Poetaster that he drew his full-length portraits of contemporaries. Even in the one figure of Every Man out of his Humour, in which we can definitely trace satirical impersonation, it is not difficult to see an underlying literary purpose. 44.

The character who is accepted as a satiric impersonation is Carlo Buffone said to be based on a Captain Hannam. The kind of identifications which the Oxford Editors deny are such as Dr. Penniman's connection of Lodge with Fungoso. Dr. Penniman argues that the tailor's bill which Fungoso was unable to pay identifies him with

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44. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., vol. IX, p. 406

Lodge "who was notorious for having been arrested in 1595 at the instigation of R. Topping, of the Strand, tailor."[45] Herford and Simpson retort:

> Now could a playwright with any faith in art make drama in this fashion? And was the law-suit of Topping *versus* Lodge or the homely fact which led up to it -- that Lodge could not pay for his clothes -- a memorable event of the period? Topping was the marvellous person -- not Lodge -- for he waited seven years before he had Lodge arrested.[46]

The matter of not being able to pay a tailor is the only clear point of correspondence between Fungoso and Lodge, and when it is remembered how often would-be gallants are represented as penurious leaches willing to resort to any stratagem to secure a new suit of clothes, the insignificance of one gallant's dealings with his tailor becomes apparent.[47]

The alignment of the satirized characters in *Poetaster* was explained in the first section of this paper, and only a brief recapitulation will be undertaken here. Jonson represented himself as Horace, Marston as Crispinius, and Dekker as Demetrius. The satire was directed mainly at Marston. One of the problems involved in assessing the satire is to know whether any given statement applies

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[45] Quoted in Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, vol. IX, p. 401

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] cf. Fitz-Dottrell who barters his wife's attentions for a cloak (*The Devil is an Ass*, I, vi); and Amorphus, who preys on Asotus continually and, among other things, gains his hat by flattery (*Cynthia's Revels*, I, iv, 106-98)

to the persons satirized or whether it is only suggested to Jonson by his understanding of the historical situation in which the satire was founded. We know, for example, that Horace represents Jonson. In *Poetaster* great stress is laid on the extent to which Horace enjoys the favor of Augustus and the esteem of such a great literary figure as Virgil. It is obvious that this support for Horace was historically true rather than true of Jonson himself. Indeed, a good part of the literary world, Shakespeare included, was against Jonson, while the satirist was by no means a court favorite at this time. Nonetheless, the powerful support for Horace may be a true indication of what Jonson felt he deserved, and, in the same way, information applying to Crispinius and Demetrius, if not really true of Marston and Dekker, may indicate Jonson's attitude.

Some of the speeches of Ovid are intended to convey Jonson's estimate of the taste of the time and the situation in which true poets find themselves. Through most of I, ii, runs an argument with Ovid on one side and his father, Captain Tucca, and Lupus on the other. With the argument ended and the others departed Ovid protests:

> O sacred *poesie*, thou spirit of artes,
> The soule of science, and the queene of soules,
> What prophane violence, almost sacriledge,
> Hath here beene offered thy divinities!
> That thine owne guiltlesse povertie should arme
> Prodigious ignorance to wound thee thus!
> For thence, is all their force of argument

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> Prodigious ignorance to wound thee thus!
> For thence, is all their force of argument

> Drawn forth against thee; or from the abuse
> Of thy great powers in adultrate braines:
> When, would men learne but to distinguish spirits,
> And set true difference twixt those jaded wits
> That runne a broken pase for common hire,
> And the high raptures of a happy Muse,
> Borne on the wings of her immortall thought,
> That kickes at earth with a disdainefull heele,
> And beats at heaven gates with her bright hooves;
> They would not then with such distorted faces,
> And desp'rate censures stab at poesie.
> They would admire bright knowledge, and their minds
> Should ne're descend on so unworthy objects,
> As gold, or titles: they would dread farre more,
> To be thought ignorant, then be knowne poore.
> Poetaster, I, ii, 231-52

Two of the ideas in these lines occur frequently in Jonson: that bad writers disgrace the art of true poets and that poetry is the highest exercise of the mind. In The Staple of News is another statement emphasizing the serious purpose and intellectual quality of poetry while suggesting there are some writers who fall far below this level:

> ...make a difference, 'twixt Poetique elves,
> And Poets: All that dable in the inke,
> And defile quills, are not those few, can thinke,
> Conceive, expresse, and steere the soules of men,
> As with a rudder, round thus, with their pen.
> He must be one that can instruct your youth,
> And keepe your Acme in the state of truth
> ...marke but his wayes,
> What flight he makes, how new....
> The Staple of News,
> Prologue for the Stage, 20-8

In the words of Envy, prefaced to Poetaster, the meanness of contemporary writers is again stressed:

> ...no poet-apes,
> ...
> With senseless glosses, and allusions.
> Poetaster, Envy, 35, 40

A similar statement occurs in the Prologue:

> ...base detractors, and illiterate apes.
> . . .
> How ere that common spawne of ignorance,
> Our frie of writers, may beslime his [Jonson's]
> fame.
>
> Poetaster, Prologue, 9, 18-9

Certainly there is in Poetaster general comment on the nature of poetry and the unhappy lot of true poets in the time of Jonson.

In discussing the presentation of the gallants in Cynthia's Revels attention was drawn to the fact that Jonson's work was more than once badly received and that his usual reaction was to condemn the taste of his detractors. It is not true that Jonson invariably set himself against the taste of the time, but it is true that he never deferred to it when it ran counter to his dramatic theories. Certainly, at the time of writing Poetaster he was climaxing a period during which he had done little to please his auditors. After the success of Every Man in His Humour he had worked the humour theory much less happily in Every Man out of His Humour, and Cynthia's Revels was a complete failure. In this last play the examination of social types and the conflict of the gallants with Crites had been worked out with such exhaustive didacticism that the play became a formless mass of comment and opinion. The writer of Poetaster had not yet produced any of the plays which were to

establish his enduring fame, he had suffered the derision of the public and the attacks of other writers, and he retorted by denouncing the taste of the time and the literary merit of his contemporaries.

The Ovid of Poetaster cannot be identified as a representation of any poet of the time, and if he serves to do more than express his creator's judgement of the popular palate, it is just possible that his arguments with his father reflect Jonson's disagreements with his step-father about schooling and poetry.

The satire of Marston begins in the first scene of the second act and is directed at his extravagant turns of speech. Crispinius pours out praises of Albius' house:

> ...you are most delicately seated here, full of sweet delight and blandishment! an excellent ayre, an excellent ayre!
>
> Poetaster, II, i, 6-8

The only valid literary criticism directed at Marston in Poetaster concerns his vocabulary and his concept of poetry. We have already noted the treatment of Marston's vocabulary. Jonson's attitude towards Marston's concept of poetry and poets is summed up in the descriptions and terms applied to Crispinius. He is called:

> ...foole, and foole,
> And ranke, and tedious foole....
>
> Ibid., III, i, 109-10

He is called a "poetaster" four times,[48] a "parcell-poet",[49] and a "plagiary".[50] Such derisive references are not to be accounted criticism so long as we associate reasoned analysis and genuine understanding with the true critic. However, other remarks are introduced which make it evident that Crispinius thinks the office of a poet not onerous nor difficult of attainment. He says:

> ...'tis love, and beautie make _Poets_...
> _Ibid._, II, ii, 75
>
> Nay, we are new turn'd _Poet_ too, which is more; and a _Satirist_ too...
> _Ibid._, III, i, 23-4

The first of these statements is taken from Plato's _Symposium_, and the second is clearly connected with Crispinius' earlier assurance to Chloe that her beauty would make him a poet.[51] These two statements are employed by Jonson for the purpose of illustrating that contemporary writers lacked the devotion and serious intent of true poets. There is no question that Marston did not agree with Jonson's conception of the poet as a moral instructor, and it is therefore understandable that in Jonson's view he took poetry lightly. A good summary of Marston's attitude is afforded in the notes to _Every_

[48] _Poetaster_, III, iv, 107, 239; V, iii, 182, 218-19
[49] _Ibid._, IV, vi, 29
[50] _Ibid._, V, iii, 219
[51] _Ibid._, II, ii, 76-7

Man out of His Humour:

The statement that

> rules of Art
> Were shapt to pleasure, not pleasure to your rules

openly rejects the Horatian ideal, which Sidney and Jonson followed, of combining instruction with delight in literary work; and it is too a bold anticipation of Dryden's attitude, for which Marston has not received credit. In the prologue to The Dutch Courtezan, 1605 (A2) he also emphasized this point:

> Slight hastie labours in this easie Play,
> Present not what you would, but what we may:
> For this vouchsafe to know the onely end
> Of our new studie is, not to offend.
> Yet thinke not, but like others raile we could,
> (Best art Presents, not what it can, but should)
> And if our pen in this seeme over slight,
> We strive not to instruct, but to delight.... 52.

We have but to contrast this idea with the statement in Discoveries to realize how different were the views of the two writers:

> Poetry, and Picture, are Arts of a like nature; and both are busie about imitation.
> ...
> Yet of the two, the Pen is more noble, then the Pencill. For that can speake to the Understanding; the other, but to the Sense. They both behold pleasure, and profit, as their common Object....
> Discoveries, 1509-10, 1514-17

These differing conceptions of the purpose of poetry

52. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., vol. IX, p.409

proceed from a fundamental difference in attitudes and cannot, therefore, be harmonized or minimized. We must choose between these ideas of the purpose of poetry, and, for my part, I prefer to accept Jonson's view that the writer has a duty to incorporate in his work some truth from life or nature or some such observation on this truth as will serve to broaden his reader's understanding.

Possibly connected with the criticism of Marston's concept of poetry is a statement by Crispinius:

> ...VARIUS, or VIRGIL, or TIBULLUS, or any of
> 'hem indeed,
> ...
> I would faine see, which of these could pen
> more verses in a day, or with more facilitie
> then I.
>
> Poetaster, III, i, 163-4, 165-7

Jonson, who later in the play refers to his "long-watch'd labours",[53] was chided often enough for his slowness in composition that he felt called upon to mention the time required for writing Poetaster and Volpone. Naturally, his belief in the serious purpose and responsibility of the poet would make the care and effort involved in writing more important than the speed with which the work is done. Crispinius is once more being represented as a trifler when he boasts of his facility in writing.

[53] Poetaster, To the Reader, 211

The remaining comments on Marston in Poetaster can not be dignified as literary criticism. There is, for example, a reference to Marston's gentle birth:

> Chloe. Are you a gentleman borne?
> Crispinius. That I am, ladie...
> Ibid., II, i, 88-9

The Oxford Editors note that when Marston entered at Brasenose College, Oxford:

> ...he was described in the University records as a gentleman's son.
> 54.

Another pointless gibe occurs in the scene where Crispinius accosts Horace. It was certainly irrelevant to any discussion of the man's literary merit to represent him as a tedious social leech. True it is that the scene between Horace and Cirspinius was based on the Ninth Satire in Horace's first book of satires, but Jonson was free to use as little or as much of the satire as he wished. His insistence on drawing a detailed portrait of the social leech and introducing the description of his arrest in a later scene can not be more kindly construed than as an attempt to pile abuse on his foe. No better indication of the uncritical attack Jonson was content to make can be had than by comparing two quotations relating to poverty. Horace chides Crispinius:

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54. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., vol. IX, p. 547

> ...your sattin sleeve begins to fret at the
> rug that is underneath it....
>
> *Ibid*., III, i, 67-8

But when Caesar suggests that Horace may be envious and overly critical of Virgil because of that writer's greater wealth, Horace replies:

> As if the filth of povertie sunke as deepe
> Into a knowing spirit, as the bane
> Of riches doth, into an ignorant soule.
>
> *Ibid*., V, i, 81-3

Other passages of mere detraction which should not be confused with honest criticism are:

> Allegations of vanity on the part of Marston (II, ii, 135-6 and III, i, 20.)
> Charges of sycophancy (currying favor with Horace, III, i, N.B. 3-5; how he would ingratiate himself with Moecoenas, III, i, 234-46, 271-8).
> Horaces's disgusted comments on his nature ("a 'HYDRA of discourse'", III, i, 285; "a Land-*Remora*", III, ii, 4; "he cleaves to me like *ALCIDES* shirt", III, ii, 7; "thy tedious face", III, ii, 25).

Once it appears that sounder criticism is being directed at Marston when Crispinius insists on reciting some verses to Horace:

> Rich was thy hap, sweet, deintie cap,
> There to be placed:
> Where thy smooth blacke, sleeke white may smacke,
> And both be graced.
>
> *Ibid*., III, i, 85-8

Crispinius adds a few notes on the poem explaining his metaphors, and the whole performance is utterly dreary. Obviously, Jonson is remarking on the quality of Marston's poetry, but the only meaning we can discover is that he

regards it as doggerel. The weakness of the scene lies in the fact that Crispinius' lines are not a parody of any lines by Marston. They do not draw attention to any particular portion of the man's work. Thus the scene is but another general and unsupported derogation.

In Poetaster we thus find comments on Marston's style and use of words which are not without foundation but which are overly severe in view of the liberty which Jonson allowed himself in the use of new terms. Unfortunately, we also find a good deal of irrelevant and unsubstantiated abuse resulting from Jonson's anger rather than from his judgement.

The references to Dekker are much less extensive than the references to Marston. For the most part the references to Dekker are abusive rather than critical. He is spoken of as:

> ...a dresser of plaies about the towne, here;
> we have hir'd him to abuse HORACE, and bring
> him in, in a play....
> Ibid., III, iv, 322-3

> He will slander any man that breathes.
> Ibid., III, iv, 339

Demetrius is made to appear a witless detractor of Horace, and is said to have a poor knowledge of Latin, as Jonson returns to his familiar charge against less well-read contemporaries.[55] Demetrius is also roundly

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[55] Poetaster, IV, iii, 104-7 and 120-3, and V, iii, 312-13

condemned in the trial scene in which Virgil applies such terms as "buffon" and "fooles" to both Crispinius and Demetrius and refers to them as being among those "who share no merit in themselves".[56] Later in the scene Demetrius confesses he envies Horace, and, finally, the social rank of both Demetrius and Crispinius is contemptuously indicated in the sentence passed on them.[57] The nearest approach to criticism of Dekker in the play occurs when Demetrius and the actor, Histrio, express whole-hearted admiration for a series of scurvy scraps which Captain Tucca's boys have culled from plays. One such gleaning is:

> O dolefull dayes! O direfull deadly dump!
> O wicked world! and worldly wickednesse!
> How can I hold my fist from crying, thump,
> In rue of this right rascall wretchednesse! *
> *Ibid.*, III, iv, 210-13

Unlike some of the comments on Marston, the comments on Dekker contain no specific references to his writings; and there is no examination of his alleged faults. There is some abusing of him, and the general inference is that he is a tasteless hack-writer or "journey-man".[58] In so far as it undertakes to comment on the writers of the time, *Poetaster* is a disappointment because Jonson was really venting his spleen.

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56. *Ibid.*, V, iii, 372, 371, 357
57. *Poetaster*, IV, vii, 27
58. *Ibid.*, III, iv, 215-22, 241-2, 247-54 (another excerpt from *The Spanish Tragedy*), 346-52

Except for the satire against Marston and Dekker and derisive references to The Spanish Tragedy, Chapman's The Blinde Begger of Alexandria, and Peele's The Battle of Alcazar, there are no satiric references to other writers or actors that have any critical significance. The last three references listed add only two more plays to the list of works mocked by Jonson, and there is no discussion of the excerpts which he quotes. The method of ridicule is to have them admired by Tucca, Histrio, and Demetrius, whose taste is clearly shown to be bad in all parts of the play. Reference is made to some actors of the Chamberlain's company, but in these references there is no critical comment -- only mocking identifications.[59]

The comments on the author's reasons for writing the play which are given in the long concluding address "To the Reader" afford further evidence of Jonson's attitude. Much of the comment in "To the Reader" is a rational analysis which failed to satisfy Jonson, but which presents the situation in the way he liked to think of it.

Thus the Author, one of the speaking persons in this apologetical dialogue, says:

59. Poetaster, III, iv, 276-306

> The Fates have not spun him the coursest thred
> That (free from knots of perturbation)
> Doth yet so live, although but to himselfe,
> As he can safely scorne the tongues of slaves....
> *Ibid*., To the Reader, 23-6

Jonson's idea that a great writer can afford to ignore the assaults of inferior writers, has been referred to before, and now, as then, it is important to note that though the idea is sound, it could not satisfy Jonson. With the opposition that was mounted against him in the stage quarrel, he may have doubted that he was really much greater than his foes -- it is certain that a large part of the playgoers, and not all of them unlettered, took exception to Jonson's assumption of superiority. Or, more likely, the truculent spirit which in 1598 led him into a duel in which he risked the gallows by dispatching Gabriel Spencer would not permit him to endure silently assaults which he thought he could answer with crushing argument. That there was plenty of pugnacity in Jonson throughout his life is well attested by such remarks as his unrepentant statement to Drummond:

> ...he had Killed his adversarie, which had hurt him in the arme & whose sword was 10 Inches Longer than his....
> *Conversations*, 247-8

We know then that such remarks as:

> ...
> Whilst I, at whom they shot, sit here shot-free,
> And as un-hurt of envy, as un-hit.
> *Poetaster*, To the Reader, 38-9

are only Jonson's ideal representation of the quarrel. He admits in the apologetical dialogue that the public was against him. Polyposus says to the Author:

> I, but the Multitude, they thinke not so, sir,
> They thinke you hit, and hurt: and dare give out
> Your silence argues it....
>
> Ibid., 40-2

Jonson makes his usual reply to the displeasure of the public:

> 'Lasse, good rout!
> I can affoord them leave, to erre so still;
> And, like the barking students of Beares-Colledge,
> To swallow up the garbadge of the time....
>
> Ibid., 43-6

One of the main ideas in the apologetical dialogue, and it is a false idea, is that Jonson's foes and the public at large err in thinking he is bothered by the attacks of other writers.

The other main idea, which is equally false, is that Poetaster was not written with the thought of taxing any particular persons:

> I can professe, I never writ that peece
> More innocent, or empty of offence.
> Some salt it had, but neyther tooth, nor gall....
>
> Polyposus. No? why, they say you tax'd
> The Law, and Lawyers; Captaines; and the Players
> By their particular names. Author. It is not so.
> I us'd no name.
>
> Ibid., 74-6, 81-4

It is noteworthy that no mention is made of writers in these speeches. When the author goes on to explain his satire he confines himself to the comments on lawyers, the character of Captain Tucca, and the references to

the actors. Now in these things he might honestly say that he had either confined himself to general comments such as are brought out in the conversation between Ovid and his father or that, as in the case of the players, he taxed them "sparingly". But in so doing he is avoiding the issue. It is the comments on writers that are important in the play. These comments are undoubtedly directed at particular persons and are not mentioned in the dialogue. Therefore he was only setting up a man of straw to deal with and not discussing the most significant satirical aspects of the play.

The dialogue ends with an insistence on the superiority of his powers over the powers of those who railed against him. The most important statement in this latter part is the description of himself at work which suits well with his emphasis on the serious thought required in writing.

> To rive his stayned quill, up to the back,
> And damne his long-watch'd labours to the fire;
> Things, that were borne, when none but the still night,
> And his dumbe candle saw his pinching throes....
>
> — *Ibid*., 210-13

H. Conclusions

The conclusions we are led to by the survey of Jonson's literary criticisms accord with the conclusions arrived at as the result of studying his social satire.

The deep faith in reason which prompted Jonson to condemn social fatuity is again evident in his literary criticism.[60] Jonson's judgements are founded on a rational analysis of language and a strictly logical sense of form. He believed that a good play must be a carefully planned and well articulated work in which every part has a vital relationship to the theme. He also believed that the language of the play should be variously fitted to the characters and the situations of the play. The fitness of the language is always to be judged, according to Jonson, by rational scrutiny. Literary excellence is, therefore, the result of dilligent and thoughtful writing and not the result of any wonderful burgeoning of an ineffable poetic fancy. Jonson's attempt to judge the language of contemporary writers is entirely consistent with his persistent faith in reason and his conviction that great writing proceeds from mental labor rather than from some indefinable emotion or inspiration. If we are mindful of his faith in reason then his attempts to analyse language, his efforts to fit the language to the character, his arguments for varied styles of writing within a play, and his meticulous development of plots are understandable and

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[60] Dunn, E. C., Op. cit., Jonson's faith in reason, especially as a corrective to preoccupation with social fatuity, is stressed on page sixty-eight.

consistent.

We must admit however, that Jonson was too confident of his own reason, for only by allowing that he thought his judgement superior to the judgements of his fellows can we explain his attempt to impose his dramatic principles on other writers while at the same time arguing his own right to modify rules previously set forth. We have seen that he defended his own variations of classical technique in the same preface in which he criticized his contemporaries for violating a classical precept which he approved. What we know of Jonson's robust temper supports the idea that he would confidently assume himself competent to vary old rules while deeming his contemporaries factious when they attempted variations. However, that we can understand the cause of the inconsistency does not alter the fact that Jonson's dogmatic assertion of the classical unities disagrees with his readiness to innovate. His own attempts to observe the classical unities have produced the finest comic plots in the English drama, but it is still wrong for him to assume that dramas of other types should conform to the standards which he established in satire.

Jonson's insistence on the didactic purpose of poetry is directly connected with his faith in reason because the idea that men can be instructed depends upon the possibility that men can think and learn, or, in other

words, that men can use their reason. That Jonson was sincere in arguing the poet's duty to instruct as well as to entertain is best shown in his plays. But for the regrettable reversions to irrelevant abuse in Poetaster and A Tale of a Tub, all the comedies are primarily concerned with ridiculing vice and folly. Though Sejanus and Catiline are less effective than the good comedies, their didactic intentions are still apparent.

The well defined sense of decorum revealed in Jonson's discussion of the material fit for inclusion in plays is the logical result of his faith in reason and his conception of the purpose of poetry. Obviously, a play can not offer worthwhile instruction unless the author selects his material with care, and the rational examination which sifts and measures the very words of a play is surely able to, and likely to, weigh the events and episodes to be presented in a play.

We must also note that the temper which frequently enlivens Jonson's writing can also undermine his critical integrity. His final retort in the "stage quarrel" began as an analysis of his rivals' language and ended as a mere villification of them. The most serious lapses of Jonson's critical integrity, which concern Marston and Dekker and Inigo Jones, all resulted from anger. He was not so coldly thoughtful as his extensive scholar-

ship and his fequent use of carefully reasoned arguments would suggest.

Jonson's standards of literary criticism are thus mutually consistent and agree with the attitudes revealed in his social criticism. His greatest flaws result from his great confidence and his irascibility.

The final test of Jonson's literary criticism is his attempt to evaluate the work of his contemporaries. For the most part, the references in his plays to other writers of his time are mere glances or gibes with no critical examination to support them. Munday's writing was the first object of his criticism and the work of Marston and Dekker is examined with some care in Poetaster. But the examination is limited to vocabulary and is offset by some irrelevant personal references. Shakespeare's work is also glanced at in the plays, usually with unfavorable references to the shifts of scene and lapses of time permitted by him. There is also objection made to the very characters of The Tempest and A Winter's Tale and to the spectacles simulated on the stage. To find more judicious criticism we must go beyond the plays to the poems and prose works and there discover that Jonson admired Shakespeare in spite of the faults he found in his work. Jonson did not apply his critical standards so carefully or so often to the judging of other men's

work as he did to the planning of his own. He is more outstanding as a theorist and practicing dramatist than he is as a literary critic.

III

MINOR CRITICISMS

A. Religion

There were few subjects on which Jonson commented more extensively or more pointedly than on religion. Only the satire of social aspirations and human gullibility and his observations on poetry figure more prominently in his dramas. Most of his comments on religion were directed against the growing sect of Puritans and proceeded from a Roman Catholic conservatism and a cynical contempt for the supporters of the new doctrine. The attacks on the Puritans began in The Case is Altered, but the more general attacks affording a broader indication of Jonson's religious attitude, began in Every Man out of His Humour. A survey of these more general statements provides a good introduction to the study of the attacks on the Puritans:

> I like such tempers well, as stand before their mistresses with feare and trembling, and before their maker, like impudent mountaines.
>
> Every Man out of His Humour, III, ix, 46-8

This comment by Macilente on the courtier, Fastidious Briske, clearly indicates that remissness in religion is accounted a folly such as vain courtiers would be prey to. Both Catiline and Sejanus are monsters of evil with no touch of religion. The sacramental potion of wine and slave's blood offered by Catiline is a perverted communion underlining the spiritual depravity of the man. Sejanus is made to exclaim:

> 'Twas onely feare, first, in the world made gods.
> _Sejanus_, II, 162

In _Volpone_ a strong Roman Catholic sentiment appears in several comments. Most notable is the scene in which the transmigrations of the soul of Pythagoras are related. The description is light in tone with a few such gibes as:

> ...and the next toss of her [Pythagoras' soul]
> Was, againe, of a whore, shee became a Philosopher....
> _Volpone_, I, ii, 19-20*

But the gibes become sharper when Jonson's own time is reached:

> Nano. ...but I
> Would aske, how of late, thou hast suffered translation,
> And shifted thy coat, in these dayes of reformation?
> Androgyno. Like one of the reformed, a Foole, as you see,
> Counting all old doctrine _heresie_.
> _Ibid._, 28-32*

Even more pointed in its reference to late events in England is Volpone's remark as he regards the presents

which his clients have left him during the morning:

> Let mee see, a pearle?
> A diamant? plate? cecchines? good mornings purchase;
> Why, this is better then rob churches....
> Volpone, I, v, 89-91

When called upon to celebrate the advent of the first Stuart to the English throne, Jonson found occasion for a more obvious castigation of those who had turned the English Reformation to their own pecuniary advantages:

> Where acts gave licence to impetuous lust
> To bury churches, in forgotten dust,
> And with their ruines raise the pandars bowers....
> A Panegyre on the King's Opening of Parliament, 101-3

Later he stressed the importance of true belief founded on knowledge:

> In the age of sacrifices, the truth of
> religion was not in the greatnesse, &
> fat of the offrings, but in the devotion,
> and zeale of the sacrificers....
> The Alchemist, Dedication, 1-3*

> Superstition
> Doth violate the Deity it worships:
> No lesse then scorne doth.
> The Staple of News, V, vi, 23-5

Hypocrisy was the charge most often levelled at the Puritans, and though it must be admitted that Jonson's unequivocal condemnation of the sect was neither fair nor well-reasoned, it was consistent in that it reflected his faith in the idea that men must understand and practise the doctrines of the religion they espouse.

Nor was it Puritans only whom he derided. The Dutch Baptists were mocked in The Staple of News, and in mocking them, Jonson directed ridicule at all those foolish enough to put stock in the wild rumors of conversions of pagans:

> They give out here, the grand Signior
> Is certainly turn'd Christian, and to cleare
> The controversie 'twixt the Pope and him,
> Which is the Antichrist; he meanes to visit
> The Church at Amsterdam, this very Sommer,
> And quit all marks o' the beast.
> The Staple of News, III, ii, 141-6 [1]

The mockery of the passage is accentuated by the idea of having a controversy with the Pope settled by the offices of the Dutch Baptists. Further ridicule of futile hopes of conversion is expressed in the description of the plan of sending a colony of cooks to the coast of America to convert the "cannibals" by:

> ...making them good, eating Christians.
> Ibid., 158

It is possible, but not probable, that Jonson was actually criticizing the idea of trying to convert savages and people of other faiths.- More probably, he was heaping scorn on both the wild reports of great con-

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[1] Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. X, p. 277
In their note on this passage, the Oxford Editors compare Jonson's report of the conversion of the "grand Signior" with an entry in the diary of Antonay à Wood on August 9, 1694: "It is confirmed that the emporour of China with 7 of his provinces (princes) are turned Xtians."

versions which would be cried up by the newsmongers and on the migration of the Pilgrims to America in 1620. Ridicule of the Dutch Baptists was not limited to ridicule of their concern with converting others. They were also reported to be awaiting the "Prophet Baal", who would prophecy according to

> ...a Cabal
> Found out but lately, and set out by Archie,
> Or some such head.... *Ibid.*, 131-3

Archie was the court fool.[2] Jonson understandably disliked the charlatans of religion as much as he disliked the alchemists or projectors; it is regrettable however, that he failed to see any of the merits of the sects he so indiscriminantly reviled.

He was equally ready to mock the well-fed divines who had more social polish than learning, and who could do little more for their congregations than put them to sleep. It was also in *The Staple of News* that it was alleged that among the suitors to a wealthy lady would be

> ...stall-fed *Doctors*, cram'd *Divines*
> ...and with those studied
> And perfum'd flatteries, as nō rome can stinke
> More elegant, then where they are.
> *Ibid.*, I vi, 67-70

A similar attack was made in *The Magnetic Lady*:

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[2] Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, vol. X, pp. 276-7

> Hee, is the Prelate of the Parish, here;
> And governes all the Dames; appoints the cheere;
> Writes downe the bils of fare; pricks all the Guests;
> Makes all the matches and the marriage feasts
> Within the ward; drawes all the parish wils;
> Designes the Legacies; and strokes the Gills
> Of the chiefe Mourners; And (who ever lacks
> Of all the kindred) hee hath first his blacks.
> Thus holds hee weddings up, and burials,
> As his maine tithing; with the Gossips stals,
> Their pewes; He's top, still, at the publique messe;
> Comforts the widow, and the fatherlesse,
> In funerall Sack! Sits 'bove the Alderman!
> For of the Ward-mote Quest, he better can
> The mysterie, then the Levetick Law:
> That peece of Clark-ship doth his Vestry awe.
> Hee is as he conceives himselfe, a fine
> Well-furnish'd, and appareled Divine.
>
> The Magnetic Lady, I, ii, 15-32

The deadly dull preacher was also pilloried:

> ...we had a Preacher that would preach folke asleepe still; and so they were prescrib'd to goe to church, by an old woman that was their physitian....
>
> Epicoene, IV, iv, 119-22

Jonson's contempt for preachers who could not supply their congregations with thoughtful sermons is further attested in a remark preserved by Drummond:

> It were good that the half of the Preachers of England were Plain ignorants for that either in their sermons they flatter, or strive to show their owne Eloquence.
>
> Conversations, 373-5

The charge of flattery is echoed by Epicure Mammon:

> And, my flatterers
> Shall be the pure, and gravest of Divines,
> That I can get for money.
>
> The Alchemist, II, ii, 59-61

The motives of preachers are chided later when Mammon, after discovering that all his expenditures have been

in vain because Subtle is an utter fake, declares:

> I will goe mount a turnep-cart, and preach
> The ende o' the world, within these two months.
>
> *Ibid.*, V, v, 81-2

Turning to *Epicoene* again, we find religious sham scorned in the advice which True-Wit gives Otter and Cutberd as they prepare to masquerade as a parson and a doctor:

> Come, master Doctor, and Master Parson, looke to your parts now, and discharge 'hem bravely; you are well set forth, performe it as well. If you chance to be out, doe not confesse it with standing still, or humming, or gaping one at another: but goe on, and talke alowd, and eagerly, use vehement action, and onely remember your termes, and you are safe. Let the matter goe where it will: you have many will doe so.
>
> *Epicoene*, V, iii, 11-18

The familiar standards of Jonson are apparent in his denunciation of the social aspirations and the intellectual poverty of some preachers of the time. At the same time the denunciation of dull preachers is, of course, a commonplace of religious satire. Chaucer's Monk is an obvious predecessor for the "cram'd Divines." Certainly, Jonson displays neither originality nor great insight in his general criticisms of churchmen.

When we turn to his attack on the Puritans we find that it is certainly no more profound or incisive than his general religious satire; in addition we find that it suffers from an unremitting bitterness which prevented its author from seeing any of their merits. However, if we allow that the satire against the Puritans is biased

and unfair, it is still true that hypocrisy has seldom been depicted more brilliantly or been made to appear more ludicrous than in the presentation of Zeal-of-the-Land-Busy, Tribulation, and Ananias. An example of Jonson's technique is to be found in the first scene of the third act of *The Alchemist*:

> Tribulation. These chastisements are common
> to the *Saints*,
> And such rebukes we of the *Separation*
> Must beare, with willing shoulders, as the trialls
> Sent forth, to tempt our frailties.
> Ananias. In pure zeale,
> I doe not like the man: He is a *heathen*.
> And speakes the language of *Canaan*, truely.
> Tribulation. I thinke him a prophane person,
> indeed. Ananias. He beares
> The visible marke of the *Beast*, in his fore-head.
> And for his *Stone*, it is a worke of darknesse,
> And, with *Philosophie*, blinds the eyes of man.
> Tribulation. Good *Brother*, we must bend unto
> all meanes,
> That may give furtherance, to the *holy cause*.
> Ananias. Which his cannot: The *sanctified*
> *cause*.
> Should have a *sanctified course*.
> Tribulation. Not alwaies necessary.
> The children of perdition are, oft-times,
> Made instruments even of the greatest workes.
> Beside, we should give somewhat to mans nature,
> The place he lives in, still about the fire,
> And fume of mettalls, that intoxicate
> The braine of man, and make him prone to passion.
> Where have you greater *Atheists*, then your Cookes?
> Or more prophane, or cholerick then your Glasse-
> men?
> More *Antichristian*, then your Bell-founders?
> What makes the Devill so devillish, I woulde
> aske you,
> *Sathan*, our common enemie, but his being
> Perpetually about the fire, and boyling
> *Brimstone*, and *arsnike*? We must give, I say,
> Unto the motives, and the stirrers up
> Of humours in the bloud. It may be so,
> When as the *worke* is done, the *stone* is made,
> This heate of his may turne into a zeale,

And stand up for the beauteous discipline,
Against the menstruous cloth, and ragg of Rome.
We must await his calling, and the coming
Of the good spirit. You did fault, t'upbraide him
With the Brethrens blessing of Heidelberg, waighing
What need we have, to hasten on the worke,
For the restoring of the silenc'd Saints,
Which ne'er will be, but by the Philosophers stone.
And, so a learned Elder, one of Scotland,
Assur'd me; Aurum potabile being
The onely med'cine, for the civill Magistrate,
T'incline him to a feeling of the cause:
And must be daily us'd, in the disease.
Ananias. I have not edified more, truely, by man;
Not, since the beautifull light, first, shone on me:
And I am sad, my zeale hath so offended.
Tribulation. Let us call on him, then.
Ananias. The motion's good,
And of the spirit; I will knock first: Peace be within.

The Alchemist, III, i, 1-49

Tribulation raises rationalization to the level of art in defending his plan to have the alchemist convert some brass articles to gold.

As well as challenging their sincerity, Jonson criticized the Puritans on another and more personal ground. The Puritan opposition to various types of entertainment, including the theatre, was anathema to the satirist. In The Sad Shepherd he commented earnestly:

...but the sowrer sort
Of Shepherds now disclaime in all such sport:
And say, our Flocks, the while, are poorely fed,
When with such vanities the Swaines are led.
Tuck. Would they, wise Clarion, were not hurried more
With Covetise and Rage, when to their store
They adde the poore mans Eaneling, and dare sell

> Both Fleece, and Carkasse, not gi'ing him the Fell.
> ...
> Lionel. O Friar, those are faults that are not seene,
> Ours open, and of worst example beene.
> They call ours, Pagan pastimes, that infect
> Our blood with ease, our youth with all neglect....
> The Sad Shepherd, I, iv, 18-25, 34-7

The old charge of hypocrisy is included in the objection to Puritan standards of conduct. One comment in Cynthia's Revels mocked the sect for their severe standards of conduct. Philautia, one of the ladies of fashion, says of Arete, who is the personification of virtue:

> O, shee is the extraction of a dozen of Puritains, for a looke.
> Cynthia's Revels, IV, v, 22-3

Another early gibe at Puritan soberness occurs when Aurelia says that if a person she likes very much were to go away:

> I should never desire to go out of black whilst I lived: but learne to speake i' the nose, and turne puritan presently.
> The Case is Altered, I, ix, 35-7

Johnson was castigating hypocrisy almost as soon as he began the criticism of Puritan soberness. In his third play he exclaimed:

> O, but to such, whose faces are all zeale,
> And (with the words of HURCULES) invade
> Such crimes as these! that will not smell of sinne,
> But seeme as they were made of sanctitie!
> Religion in their garments, and their haire
> Cut shorter then their eye-browes!
> Every Man out of His Humour, Induction, 38-43

Though Jonson shifted his allegiance from Protes--

tant to Catholic and back to Protestant, he was always High Church and harbored a dislike for the Puritans throughout his life. The criticism to which this dislike gave rise is undistinguished being confined, for the most part, to a mere recital of the charges which can be made against the weaker members of any zealous sect. There is no spark of generosity in all his criticism of the group, and there is no recognition of sincere attempts to achieve a higher standard of conduct.[3] The only merit that can be claimed for any of Jonson's attacks on the Puritans is that the satire in The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair is well executed. It is still destructive criticism with no leavening of commendation for the virtues of the sect, but it is effective satire full of the puns, topical references, and sharp wit of Jonson at his best. That Jonson's

[3] Baum, H. W., The Satiric and the Didactic in Ben Jonson's Comedy, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1947. On pages 121-135 it is pointed out that the general pattern of satire against the Puritans was well established before Jonson began writing. Jonson emphasized their hypocrisy, but in so doing he was not breaking with tradition. Baum sums up the opportunity which the Puritans afforded to satirists:

> The dramatists found the Puritan very useful. These unfashionable-looking, sober individuals with narrow ruffs and short hair, offered a clearly defined group which the audience enjoyed seeing satirized.
>
> p. 122

bigotry was not unusual by the standards of his time does not excuse it; however, it is at least entertaining in his finest plays. Even this praise must be tempered by a further observation. There is no doubt that Jonson's technique and taste are less nearly perfect in Bartholomew Fair than in The Alchemist or Volpone. The satire in Bartholomew Fair is sometimes splendid, but it has serious flaws. The most notable flaw is having Zeal-of-the-Land-Busy dispute with the puppets. The scene makes him appear too vacuous and is actually inconsistent with the ability to rationalize and dissimulate which he displays elsewhere.

Having admitted Jonson's bigotry and shallowness, it is only fair to see how the determined critic of vice and folly makes capital game of the Puritans. The scene in which Busy argues around his earlier denunciation of the fair so that he may be free to satisfy his longing for some savory pork he has scented is not mere detraction of a religious sect; the scene is another of Jonson's slashing attacks against greed and folly. The scene begins with Busy fabricating an excuse for Purecraft's longing for pork:

> Verily, for the disease of longing, it is a disease, a carnall disease, or appetite, incident to women: and as it is carnall, and incident, it is naturall, very naturall: Now Pigge, it is a meat, and a meat that is nour-

> ishing, and may be long'd for, and so consequently eaten; it may be eaten; very exceedingly well eaten: but in the Fayre, and as a Bartholmew-pig, it cannot be eaten, for the very calling it a Bartholmew-pigge, and to eat it so, is a spice of Idolatry, and you make the Fayre, no better then one of the high Places. This I take it, is the state of the question. A high-place.
>
> Bartholomew Fair, I, vi, 48-57

Purecraft then urges Busy to find a way of justifying her longing beyond all question:

> Good Brother Zeale-of-the-land, thinke to make it as lawfull as you can.
>
> Ibid., 60-1

And Busy responds with a handsome piece of sophistry:

> Surely, it may be otherwise, but it is subject, to construction, subject, and hath a face of offence, with the weake, a great face, a foule face, but that face may have a vaile put over it, and be shaddowed, as it were, it may be eaten, and in the Fayre, I take it, in a Booth, the tents of the wicked: the place is not much, not very much, we may be religious in midst of the prophane, so it be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humblenesse; not gorg'd in with gluttony, or greedinesse; there's the feare: for, should she goe there, as taking pride in the place, or delight in the uncleane dressing, to feed the vanity of the eye, or the lust of the palat, it were not well, it were not fit, it were abominable, and not good.
>
> Ibid., 67-79

Jonson's religious attitude was, in a sense, moderate; it was also a distinctly High Church attitude and was consonant with his ideas on other matters. As a robust and hearty man who enjoyed good company and good cheer as much as he enjoyed good books, Jonson was pre-

disposed to distruct the dour asceticism of the Puritans. The idea that their objection to worldly pleasures was nothing more than bitter reaction to the buffetings of life was clearly suggested when he made the disillusioned Sir Epicure Mammon announce his intention of becoming a doomsday preacher. In Jonson's view, religious devotion was not inconsistent with lusty love of life, and he could not be convinced that the Puritans' stern moral code and objections to the pleasures of the flesh were anything more than cynical disenchantment.

However, if to Jonson good manners and good cheer were not inconsistent with religious devotion, neither were they alone enough to make a good churchman. Religion to him was an essential component of human existence, and as such it merited the close application of the highest of human faculties -- reason. Consequently he detested the "cram'd divines". The truly religious man, by Jonson's lights, thoroughly understands the tenets of his faith. As Jonson protested when the leaders, or would-be leaders, of society gave themselves over entirely to frivolity, so he scorned churchmen who enjoyed the prestige of their offices without seriously attempting to discharge the duties of those offices. All of Jonson's criticism was moderate in the sense that he urged men to allow somewhat for the desires of the

flesh while not forgetting the paramount importance of the cultivation and application of the power of reason. A sound balance between the physical and mental sides of our existence was always his aim.

B. Lawyers

It is not easy to draw general conclusions from Jonson's remarks on lawyers. There was no other profession which he so consistently ridiculed, and yet, *Poetaster* is dedicated to a lawyer, Richard Martin. In this play there are several sharp attacks on lawyers, yet, in the Dedication are the words:

> I send you this peece of what may live of mine; for whose innocence, as for the Authors, you were once a noble and timely undertaker, to the greatest Justice of this kingdome.
> *Poetaster*, Dedication, 9-12*

The Dedication of *Every Man out of His Humour* is even more striking, for that play is dedicated to the Inns of Court, and the Dedication begins:

> TO THE NOBLEST NOURCERIES OF HUMANITY, AND
> LIBERTY, IN THE KINGDOME:
> The Innes of Court.
> [4] -

Later in the Dedication there is a reference to:

> ...your more noble, and use-full studies to the publicke.
> *Every Man out of His Humour*, Dedication, 18-19

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[4] *Every Man out of His Humour*, Dedication, 1-5, In the facsimile text these words are divided into five lines and are centred.

These respectful dedications may be reconciled with Jonson's criticism of the legal profession by allowing that the writer would make a distinction between honorable and humane students of the law and those who are such that Turfe is driven to complain:

> I vurst mun vee a Returney,
> And then make legges to my great man o' law,
> To be o' my counsell, and take trouble-vees,
> And yet zay nothing vor me, but devise
> All district meanes, to ransackle me o' my money.
> A Tale of a Tub, IV, i, 58-62

This speech of Turfe's was probably in the early version of the play, and indicates that Jonson was ridiculing shyster lawyers at the very outset of his career.

It is not surprising that Jonson distinguished honorable practitioners of the law from greedy scoundrels, but it is surprising to see how often he apologized to the worthy members of the profession. There are four distinct references to the better sort of lawyers, including the two dedications already cited. There are also two apologies in Volpone and The Magnetic Lady. In Volpone, the presentation of Voltore gave opportunity for many sharp gibes, and Jonson tempered these with the qualifying remark:

> Thou VOLTORE, to take away the scandale
> Thou hast giv'n all worthy men, of thy profession,
> Art banish'd from their fellowship, and our state.
> Volpone, V, xii, 126-8

Later, Jonson again had to take care to prevent too wide an interpretation of his ridicule of an individual lawyer:

> ...or what eminent Lawyer, by the ridiculous Mr. Practise? who hath rather his name invented for laughter, then any offence, or injury it can stick on the reverend Professors of the Law....
>
> The Magnetic Lady, III, Chorus, 5-8

Lawyers were not the only group Jonson tendered occasional apologies to. Even as he launched his most furious satire of manners, he dedicated it to the court. In The Staple of News a careful apology is made to men of many professions and callings:

> If thou had'st sought out good, and vertuous persons
> Of these professions: I'had lov'd thee, and them.
> For these shall never have that plea 'gainst me,
> Or colour of advantage, that I hate
> Their callings, but their manners, and their vices.
> A worthy Courtier, is the ornament
> Of a Kings Palace, his great Masters honour.
> This is a moth, a rascall, a Court-rat,
> That gnawes the common-wealth with broking suits,
> And eating grievances! So, a true Souldier,
> He is his Countreys strength, his Soveraignes safety,
> And to secure his peace, he makes himselfe
> The heyre of danger, nay the subject of it,
> And runnes those vertuous hazards, that this Scarre-crow
> Cannot endure to heare of.
> ...
> Here is Pyed-mantle,
> 'Cause he's an Asse, doe not I love a Herald?
> Who is the pure preserver of descents,
> The keeper faire of all Nobility,
> ...
> This dog-Leach,
> You stile him Doctor, 'cause he can compile
> An Almanack; perhaps erect a Scheme

> For my great Madams monkey: when 't has ta'ne
> A glister, and bewrai'd the Ephemerides.
> Doe I despise a learn'd Physician,
> In calling him a Quack-Salver? or blast
> The ever-living ghirlond, alwaies greene
> Of a good Poet? when I say his wreath
> Is piec'd and patch'd of dirty withered flowers?
> The Staple of News, IV, ic, 135-68

Similarly, the epigram, "Unto true Souldiers", which is quoted in the apologetical dialogue, "To the Reader", appended to Poetaster, is another example of an apology being given to a class of men frequently abused in the plays.

The four placating remarks about lawyers which are quoted above are thus not unique or singularly emphatic. However, it is not unlikely that Jonson more often took care to make amends to the legal profession than to any other profession simply because he had more to do with lawyers. We have seen that he was summoned before the magistrates on several occasions to answer for his plays and for the death of a fellow actor. On these occasions he needed legal advice, and he was not the man to deny himself welcome aids merely through lack of a few tactful apologies. For all his temper and truculence, Jonson was a practical man. He might lay about with utmost abandon in a quarrel with fellow writers, but he took care and pains to avoid giving unnecessary offence to those who could greatly help or harm him -- Inigo Jones excepted.

A second question relating to the criticism of law-

yers is more important. What are the natures of these criticisms, and why were they made? Three typical comments are:

> Now, let me dye, sir, if I know your lawes;
> Or have th power to stand still halfe so long
> In their loud courts, as while a case is argued.
> *Poetaster*, III, i, 214-16
>
> ...the faire lands,
> That were the *Clyents*, are the *Lawyers*, now....
> *The Devil is an Ass*, II, iv, 33-4
>
> Here is, *Domine Picklocke*:
> My *man o' Law*, sollicits all my causes,
> Followes my businesse, makes, and compounds
> my quarrells,
> Betweene my tenants and mee, sowes all my strifes,
> And reapes them too, troubles the countrey for mee,
> And vexes any neighbour, that I please.
> *The Staple of News*, II, v, 7-12

There is no great insight revealed in these comments, and complaints of like nature come frequently from the pens of other writers or even from the tongues of men. Lawyers have always been subject to this kind of abuse as their profession is one which provides ample opportunity for the skillful and unscrupulous individual to profit from the mistakes or ignorance of others. Counsellors who can show their clients how to make the most profitable use of existing laws always command high fees. However, we must not hastily dismiss Jonson's comments as nothing more significant than common taunts well phrased.

These comments were worked into the framework of

his plays; he never wrote a play mainly for the purpose of satirizing lawyers. Thus, his criticism of lawyers is never so all-pervasive as his criticism of social activities or literature. Still, though the criticism of lawyers is not basic to any of his plays, it remains the most extensive criticism he directed at any professional group. Why should Jonson concern himself more with the satire of lawyers than with the satire of doctors or clergymen? The answer is not far to seek.

What, exactly, is his complaint against lawyers? In Poetaster, when Lupus says he will "Challenge the penaltie of the lawes against" Horace and Mecoenas, Tucca advises him:

> I, and remember to begge their land betimes;
> before some of these hungrie court-hounds
> sent it out.
>
> Poetaster, V, iii, 52-3

Ovid declares he can see no fault in his decision to:

> ...studie not the tedious lawes;
> And prostitute my voyce in everie cause?
>
> Ibid., I, i, 47-8

Morose protests against the disputes in law courts:

> ...there is such a noyse i' the court, that they have frighted mee home, with more violence then I went! such speaking, and counter-speaking, with their several voyces of citations, appellations, allegations, certificates, attachments, intergatories, references, convictions and afflictions indeed, among the Doctors and Proctors.
>
> Epicoene, IV, vii, 13-19

Mosca provides this description of a lawyer's agile duplicity:

> I, oft, have heard him say, how he admir'd
> men of your large profession, that could
> speake
> To every cause, and things mere contraries,
> Till they were hoarse againe, yet all be law;
> That, with most quick agilitie, could turne,
> And re-turne; make knots, and undoe them;
> Give forked counsell; take provoking gold
> On either hand, and put it up....
> Volpone, I, iii, 52-9

This idea is sounded several times:

> Tut, I am Vertumnus,
> On every change, or chance, upon occasion,
> A true Chamaelion, I can colour for't.
> I move upon my axell, like a turne-pike,
> Fit my face to the parties, and become,
> Streight, one of them.
> The Staple of News, III, i, 34-8

> He is a Lawyer, and must speake for his Fee,
> Against his Father, and Mother, all his kindred;
> His brothers, or his sisters: no exception
> Lies at the Common-Law. He must not alter
> Nature for forme....
> The Magnetic Lady, II, v, 55-9

These comments stress a lawyer's willingness to argue any case as if this willingness were amoral. Actually, the practice of law is predicated on the principle that the lawyer is not obliged to judge his client. The lawyer is only charged to present all evidence and arguments that favor his client. With the opposing lawyers making the best possible presentations, it is assumed that the judge or jury will be best able to render a just decision. Such a theory of law is unsatisfying in

cases where it is obvious that a lawyer is defending a guilty person and may hope to save him on a purely technical point of the law. What is obvious to every thoughtful person was surely obvious to Jonson. Lengthy disputes in court over technicalities would not be needed but for the imperfections in human beings. If all men were willing to deal honestly and equitably, a simple code of laws needing no professional interpreters would suffice. The great codes of law and the great fame of important jurists testify to two things: the great efforts of the lawgivers to provide good government, and the evils of human beings which make it necessary to protect a man against his fellows.

Jonson, who scorned greed and folly in base courtiers and argued for more rational conduct on the part of all human beings, disliked the conditions which necessitated the development of the practice of law. That regulating our dealings with other men should become the task of tribunals and should require the services of an entire professional class impressed him as another evidence of the way in which human faults add to the difficulties of existence.

How deeply Jonson thought on this subject we cannot tell. It certainly did not interest him as much as some other topics already mentioned, and he did not trouble, in his poems or prose works, to elaborate his

comments on lawyers. The scornful comments and careful apologies scattered through the plays remain our only source of information.

That he applauded some lawyers is not inconsistent with his resentment that the profession was needed at all. We need not think the apologies were insincere attempts to curry favor in places where it was needed. Admittedly, the favor of lawyers was a great help, but even though he objected that the faults of men had made the legal profession necessary, he could still admire those who practiced law with honesty and wisdom. Truly, if the abuse of the law is for the benefit of the evil-doer, the right use of the law is the surest protection for the innocent.

Jonson's comments on lawyers may thus be accepted as one more example of his distaste for selfish and irresponsible conduct.

C. Gullibility

Obviously, gullibility has much to do with many human follies. Every cheat practicing upon human beings depends upon their gullibility. However, it can be argued that gullibility is only a composite of other weaknesses. The victims of Volpone, for example, are greedy for his wealth and in their greed are only too

willing to accept every explanation or suggestion proffered by Mosca. Are these victims gullible, or is their gullibility really the product of two more basic weaknesses, stupidity and greed? A possible answer to such an explanation of gullibility would be that there are many people who are not greedy, but who still appear gullible. The prince who loves flattery and surrounds himself with deceitful courtiers is certainly too ready to believe in his own merit. His unsuspecting credulity causes him to value the false coin with which his flatterers bribe his judgement. But this performance might be explained as a combination of pride and stupidity. However, one group of characters described by Jonson displays a credulity which has no tincture of either greed or pride. These characters are foolish, but their folly is limited to an absurd willingness to believe what they are told. They gain no rewards and enjoy no swelling pride as a result of their belief. Considering that the only satirized characteristic of these people is their readiness of belief we may argue that Jonson conceived gullibility as a distinct quality.

Gullibility is treated as a distinct characteristic in The Staple of News. Unfortunately, Jonson was not, in 1625-26, the master dramatist he had been in 1610 or 1614. There are some brilliant scenes in the play, and it has better individual scenes and finer satirical

touches than can be found in *The Devil is an Ass*, which preceded it by some ten years. But the fine articulation of plot which distinguishes Jonson's best plays is lacking here, and, as in *Cynthia's Revels*, there is a puzzling blend of realistic and allegorical characters. Unity of action suffers from a reversion to the use of plot and sub-plot. The satire of newsmongers, as presented in the operation of Cymbal's staple, has no essential connection with the stratagems employed by Peni-boy Canter to effect the reformation of Peni-boy Junior. The staple scenes provide the finest portions of the play while the activities of the two Peni-boys are diversions which lessen the impact of the topical satire. Nonetheless, the fact that Jonson's elaborating intellect was not under proper restraint when he wrote this play does not obscure the satirist's attitude.

There is no mistaking his derision for credulous thirst for novelty in these lines:

> Peni-boy Jr. Why, me thinkes Sir, if the honest common people
> Will be abus'd, why should not they ha' their pleasure,
> In the believing Lyes, are made for them;
> As you i' th'*office*, making them your selves?
> Fitton. O Sir! it is the printing we oppose.
> Cymbal. We not forbid that any *Newes*, be made,
> But that 't be printed; for when *Newes* is printed,
> It leaves Sir to be *Newes*. While 'tis but written--
> Fitton. Though it be ne'er so false, it runnes *Newes* still.

> Peni-boy Jr. See divers mens opinions! unto
> some,
> The very printing of them, makes them Newes;
> That ha' not the heart to beleeve any thing,
> But what they see in print. Fitton. I, that's
> an Error
> Ha's abus'd many; but we shall reforme it,
> As many things beside (we have a hope)
> Are crept among the popular abuses.
> Cymbal. Nor shall the Stationer cheat upon
> the Time,
> By buttering over againe -- Fitton. Once, in
> Seven Yeares,
> As the age doates -- Cymbal. And growes forget-
> full o' them,
> His antiquated Pamphlets, with new dates.
> But all shall come from the Mint. Fitton. Fresh
> and new stamp'd,
> Cymbal. With the Office-Seale, Staple Commoditie.
> Fitton. And if a man will assure his Newes, he
> may:
> Two-pence a Sheet he shall be warranted,
> And have a policie for't.
> The Staple of News, I, v, 42-66

Jonson's inclination towards personal satire is also apparent in these lines, for the phrase, "buttering over againe", is a reference to a contemporary newsmonger, Nathaniel Butter.[6.]

The topical interest of the satire lies in the ridicule heaped on the news sheets which began appearing in England after the outbreak of a continental war in 1618. Jonson attacked not only the gullibility of the customers but also the greedy dishonesty of the publishers. There is no indication in the satire of whether or not Jonson suspected the newsmongers of being propagandists; his

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6. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., vol. II, p. 172

denunciation of them was entirely concerned with the fact that in their eagerness to sell news to a clamoring public they did not fret about the reliability of their sources. He even alleged that when mere gossip and wild rumors would not suffice, the newsmongers would resort to sheer fabrication to fill up their sheets.

More specific protests against the indiscriminate hungering after all scraps of news are uttered in the intermeanes and the address "To the Readers" which follows the Intermeane after the second Act. The evidence of Jonson's introduction indicates that this address was added after the first performance of the play as an answer to auditors who had made "so sinister an interpretation... as if the soules of most of the Spectators had liv'd in the eyes and eares of these ridiculous Gossips that tattle betweene the Acts."[7.] In defending his intention in the play Jonson says:

> ...this ridiculous Office of the Staple, wherein the age may see her owne folly, or hunger and thirst after publish'd pamphlets of Newes, set out every Saturday, but made all at home, & no syllable of truth in them: then which there cannot be a greater disease in nature, or a fouler scorñe put upon the times.
>
> "To the Readers", 11-16

The nature of those who long to be fed with novel reports of the events of the day is more directly suggested in the discourse of one of the gossips who "tattle

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7. The Staple of News, "To the Reader", 4-7

betweene the Acts."

> But whether it were true, or no, we Gossips are bound to beleeve it, an't be once out, and a foot: how should wee entertaine the time else, or find our selves in fashionable discourse, for all companies, if we do not credit all, and make more of it, in the reporting?
> Intermeane after III, 37-41

With such evidence that Jonson considered gullibility a distinct characteristic, more definite interpretations of remarks in other plays become possible. Jonson's concept of gullibility can be interpreted as: willingness to believe certain statements without careful investigation of their foundations. It is a willful blindness in certain matters. Voltore, in Volpone, for example, is a lawyer, and we may conclude, from his wealth, a successful one. He is no fool, as are the base courtiers who devote themselves to trivialities, but his fond wish to be the inheritor of Volpone's wealth makes him a willing believer of all that Mosca says. When gloating over their success, Mosca and Volpone remark this credulity in all those who aided them in their first appearance in court:

> Volpone. That, yet, to me's the strangest!
> how th'hast borne it!
> That these (being so divided 'mongst themselves)
> Should not sent some-what, or in me, or thee,
> Or doubt their owne side. Mosca. True, they
> will not see't.
> Too much light blinds 'hem, I thinke. Each
> of hem.

> Is so possest, and stuft with his owne hopes,
> That any thing, unto the contrary,
> Never so true, or never so apparent,
> Never so palpable, they will resist it --
> Volpone. Like a temptation of the divell.
>
> Volpone, V, ii, 19-28

This trait is timeless and is as discernable in the reluctance of primitive science to disbelieve in a geocentric universe as in the eagerness of an unruly mob to follow the easy suggestions of a demagogue. This trait is simply man's universal proclivity towards believing what he wants to believe. When Jonson rails at human gullibility with his typical truculence, he is doing what a writer such as Eric Knight does more than three hundred years later with charming wit.[8.]

Jonson notes this willingness to believe in men of high and low rank. Arruntius comments on Tiberius' acceptance of Sejanus' compliment:

> O, what is it, proud slime will not beleeve,
> Of his own worth, to hear it equall prais'd
> Thus with the gods?
>
> Sejanus, I, 381-3

Arruntius later comments on a courtier's apparently vain hope that Tiberius is preparing to destroy Sejanus:

> How easily
> Do wretched men beleeve, what they would have!
>
> Ibid., IV, 491-2

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8. Eric Knight, in his short story, "All Yankees are Liars", shows how a group of men in a Yorkshire pub scoff at an American visitor's attempt to tell them what California is like, and only accept a yarn which agrees with their exaggerated conception of America.

The Alchemist undoubtedly concerns itself with exposing the cheats of the alchemists and projectors. But Subtle, Face, and Doll do not practise on a succession of mere gulls. Contrast Fitz-Dotterell in The Devil is an Ass with Sir Epicure Mammon. Fitz-Dotterell is an utter fool, willing to barter his wife's attentions for a fine cloak to be seen in at plays. He spends almost all of his wife's money and all of his own on vain schemes and even undertakes to have another woman teach his wife new manners. His every action stamps him a vain and vacuous fop. On the other hand, the wit and imagination of Sir Epicure Mammon elevate him above mere foppishness. He is a voluptuary, and the trio of cheats must play skillfully on his eagerness to induce the willing blindness which makes him prey to their designs. Mammon does not dream of mere "punkes" and "cockatrices" but, rather of living in a re-creation of epicurean Rome:

> Then, my glasses,
> Cut in more subtill angles, to disperse,
> And multiply the figures, as I walke
> Naked betweene my succubae. My mists
> I'le have of perfume, vapor'd 'bout the roome,
> To loose our selves in; and my baths, like
> pits
> To fall into: from whence, we will come forth,
> And rowle us drie in gossamour, and roses.
> The Alchemist, II, ii, 45-52

With a cynicism which the base courtiers were incapable of, Sir Epicure comments:

> I'll ha' no bawds,
> But fathers, and mothers. They will doe it best.
> Best of all others. And, my flatterers
> Shall be the pure, and gravest of Divines,
> That I can get for money.
>
> *Ibid*., II, ii, 57-61

Gulling Sir Epicure is not merely capitalizing on ignorance; it is a careful provoking of his desires which ultimately engenders the faith in alchemy which makes him a profitable victim.

The best example of Jonson's delight in portraying the extremes of credulity that human beings can sink to is the presentation of Dapper who hopes to meet the "Faery Queene". Dapper believes this incredible promise because he desperately hopes that becoming her favorite will make him unbeatable at the gaming table. Astonishing as it may seem, this deception has some later parallels in real life. The Oxford Editors quote Edward Marchant's account of the fleecing of Thomas Moore and his wife at the hands of John and Alice West (*circa* 1613):

> They brought him into a vault, where they showed him two attired like the King and Queene of Fayries, and by them little Elves and Goblings, and in the same place an infinite company of bags, and upon them written, this is for *Thomas Moore*, this is for his wife, and would not let him touch any thing.[9]

Considering the succession of victims from various sta-

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9. Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit*., vol. X, p. 98

tions of life including a knight, a clark, Puritans, a shopkeeper, a young heir, and the heir's sister, that are practiced on Jonson's ridicule of gullibility is quite clear. He takes delight in explaining the ways in which men may be cheated. His interest ranged from the simple cheats which hostlers practised on those who travelled by horse,[10] to the jargon and complexity of the alchemical swindles. Even in describing the absurd conduct of Win Little-Wit and Dame Over-Doo, who come near to being prostituted, he shows his scorn for those whose longing for novelty or whose petty pride makes them credulous of any promise.

Jonson's faith in intellect is again evident in the derisive presentation of these people who stifle whatever power of critical scrutiny they possess when the right appeal is made to them. A comment on flattery in _Discoveries_ indicates how strongly Jonson was convinced that to be decieved men had willingly to pervert their judgement:

> Nay, they will hire fellowes to flatter them, with suites, and suppers, and to prostitute their judgements.
>
> _Discoveries_, 1088-90

> _Flattery_ is a fine Pick-lock of tender eares: especially of those, whome fortune hath borne

---

[10] _The New Inn_, III, i, 62-66

> high upon their wings, that submit with dignity, and authoritie to it, by a soothing of themselves. For indeed men could never be taken, in that abundance, with the Sprindges of others Flattery, if they began not there; if they did but remember, how much more profitable the bitternesse of Truth were, then all the honey distilling from a whorish voice....
>
> Ibid., 1075-82

Perhaps it was easier for Jonson than for most men to discern the folly of a too easy credence. Jonson was a sceptical reader and observer who never valued a good tale more highly than an accurate report. Fantastic romances and the mere stringing together of fine-sounding words he abhorred, as is shown in Horace's comment on Virgil:

> His learning labours not the schoole-like glosse,
> That most consists in ecchoing wordes, and termes,
> And soonest wins a man an empty name:
> Nor any long, or far-fetcht circumstance,
> Wrapt in the curious generalities of artes:
> But a direct, and analyticke summe
> Of all the worth and first effects of artes.
> And for his poesie, 'tis so ramm'd with life,
> That it shall gather strength of life....
>
> Poetaster, V, i, 129-37

Literature of more commonplace nature was similarly judged by a stern realism. Drummond reported him as saying:

> John Stow had monstrous observations in his Chronicle and was of his craft a Tailour.
>
> Conversations, 599-600

That unsceptical curiosity leads men into foolish errors

is also suggested in a later comment:

> No Theatres are more cheated with apparances,
> Or these shop-lights, then th' Ages, and folke in them,
> That seeme most curious.
>
> The Magnetic Lady, IV, vii, 44-6

When Jonson ridiculed the gullibility of those who put stock in the workings of alchemists, the forecasts of astrologers, and the schemes of projectors, he was reiterating the plea that men should think what they were about and should govern their actions reasonably rather than submit to the promptings of every fond impulse.

We have thus far noted in some detail his analyses of the gullible thirst for news and the equally gullible faith in the power of the alchemists. A final word on his scorn of astrology and the plans of the projectors is now in order. The nature of astrology need not be discussed here; we have only to remark Jonson's treatment of it. In none of his plays is there anything like a thorough exposé of astrology, but there are a few comments in various of the plays. Mr. Practise, a lawyer who has been suitor to a lady who gives birth to a child out of wedlock, denies his interest in her, protesting that his knowledge of astrology forwarned him:

> But the truth is, I never had affection,
> Or any liking to this Neice of hers.
> Compasse. You fore-saw somewhat then?
> Practice. I had my notes,
> And my Prognosticks. Compasse. You read Almanacks,
> And study 'hem to some purpose, I beleeve?

> Practice. I doe confesse, I doe beleeve,
> and pray too:
> According to the Planets, at sometimes.
> Compasse. And doe observe the signe in
> making Love?
> Practise. As in Phlebotomy. Compasse. And
> choose your Mistris
> By the good dayes, and leave her by the bad?
> Practice. I doe, and I doe not. Compasse. A
> little more
> Would fetch all his Astronomie from _Allestree_.
> _Ibid_., IV, ii, 23-34

What Practise is really doing is fashioning an excuse after the event. The Allestree referred to was a maker of almanacs from 1624-43.[11] Subtle, besides his alchemical pretensions, dabbles in astrology. During their first quarrel Face reproves him:

> I will
> ...
> Write thee up bawd, in Paules; have all thy
> trickes
> ...
> Erecting _figures_, in your rowes of houses....
> I will have
> A booke, but barely reckoning thy impostures,
> Shall prove a true _philosophers stone_, to
> printers.
> _The Alchemist_, I, i, 91, 93, 96, 100-2[12]

The almanac makers are derided in such an early play as _Every Man out of His Humour_. In this play, the miser, Sordido, places vain hope in the weather predictions of the almanacs.[13]

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[11] Herford and Simpson, _Op. cit_., vol. X, p. 335

[12] Another interesting derisive reference to astrology occurs in _The Staple of News_, II, iv, 71-8

[13] _Every Man out of His Humour_, I, iii; III, vii

The representation of the projectors is more extensive. The projectors correspond to the modern confidence men, and their method is to outline specious projects in hopes of getting the victims to invest money. The most notable projector in Jonson's plays is Meere-Craft. With his vague references to people prospering through his projects, his confederates to praise his work, and his casual rehersal of various schemes, he displays all the guile of the modern huckster. Some excerpts from one long scene will suffice to delineate the type as conceived by Jonson:

> Meere-Craft. Sir, Money's a whore, a bawd, a drudge;
> Fit to runne out on errands: Let her goe.
> *Via pecunia*! when she's runne and gone,
> And fled and dead; then will I fetch her, againe,
> With *Aqua-vitae*, out of an old Hogs-head!
> While there are lees of wine, or dregs of beere,
> I'le never want her! Coyne her out of cobwebs,
> Dust, but I'll have her! Raise wooll upon egge-shells,
> Sir, and make grasse grow out o' marro-bones,
> *To a* To make her come. (Commend mee to your Mistresse,
> *waiter*, Say, let the thousand pound but be had ready,
> And it is done) I would but see the creature
> (Of flesh, and blood) the man, the *prince*, indeed,
> That could imploy so many millions
> As I would help him to.
> ...
> Tell Mr. *Wood-cock*, I'll not faile to meet him
> Upon th' *Exchange* at night. Pray him to have
> The writings there, and wee'll dispatch it. Sir,
> (Meere-Craft now begins to work upon Fitz-Dottrell)
> You are a Gentleman of a good presence,
> A handsome man (I have considered you
> As a fit stocke to graft honours upon:)
> I have a project to make you a *Duke*, now.
> ...
> Hee shall but be an undertaker with mee,
> In a most feasible bus'nesse. It shall cost him
> Nothing. Ingine. Good, Sr. Mere-Craft. Except

> he please, but's count'nance;
> (That I will have) t(o)'appeare in't, to great men,
> For which I'll make him one. Hee shall not draw
> A string of's purse. I'll drive his pattent for him.
> We'll take in Cittizens, *Commoners*, and *Aldermen*,
> To beare the charge, and blow 'hem off againe,
> Like so many dead flyes, when 'tis carryed.
> The thing is for recovery of drown'd land,
> . . .
> I have computed all, and made my survey
> Unto an acre. I'll beginne at the Pan,
> Not, at the skirts: as some ha' done, and lost,
> All that they wrought, their timber-worke, their trench,
> Their bankes all borne away, or else fill'd up
> By the next winter. Tut, they never went
> The way: I'll have it all.
> . . .
>   But Sir,
> This lookes too large for you, I see. Come hither.
> We'll have a lesse. Here's a plain fellow, you see him,
> Has his black bag of papers, there, in Buckram,
> Wi' not be sold for th'Earledome of *Pancridge*: Draw,
> Gi' me out one, by chance. Project 4.
> *Dog-skinnes*?
> Twelve thousand pound! the very worst, at first.
> Fitz-Dottrel. Pray you let's see't Sir.
> Meere-Craft. 'Tis a toy, a trifle!
> Fitz-Dottrel. Trifle! 12. thousand pound for dogs-skins? Meere-Craft. Yes,
> But, by my way of dressing, you must know, Sir,
> And med'cining the leather, to a height
> Of improv'd ware, like your *Borachio*
> Of *Spaine*, Sir, I can fetch nine thousand for't--
> . . .
> *The Devil is an Ass*, II, i, 1-15, 20-26, 36-45, 52-8, 60-72

The entire scene is carried through at this pace and ends with Meere-Craft and Fitz-Dottrel drawing aside for private discussion of the schemes the projector has broached.

Sir Politique-Would-Bee, in *Volpone*, is also a pro-

jector, but he is an amateur who takes his designs seriously and does not promote them for the fleecing of gulls as does Meere-Craft. Sir Politic* also has little or none of Meere-Craft's cunning.

Such are the types of men and situations which Jonson used to satirize gullibility. He can be credited with a good deal of well-reasoned scepticism on the basis of his persistent scorn for alchemists, astrologers, projectors, and flatterers. To dwell in Elizabethan and Jacobean England and be so free from superstition was no mean feat.

D. Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones

Jonson's attack on Inigo Jones has no value as an estimate of the architect, but it is a significant example of the distortions of fact to which the poet was willing to resort. The furious abuse directed at Jones cannot be excused on the grounds that the bitter constraints of age, disease, and poverty moved the poet to lash out at the designer who became court favorite and hurried him into discard. Jonson was abusing Jones even in the happier days of his life, for two epigrams appearing in the Folio of 1616 roundly scourge the architect. Also, in 1619, Jonson told Drummond that he had:

> ...said to Prince Charles of Inigo Jones,
> that when he wanted words to express the

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* For Politic read Politique

> greatest Villaine in ye world he would call him ane Inigo.
>
> *Conversations*, 467-9

The cause of the enmity is easily discerned. Jonson and Jones were masters of their crafts, and each felt that his part of the masques in which they collaborated was the more important. The pride of the two artists was such that the order of their names on the title pages of the editions of the masques became the subject of bitter dispute. Thus, Mr. Pory, in a letter to Sir Thomas Puckering, wrote:

> The last Sunday, at night, the King's Masque was acted in the Banqueting House.... The inventor or poet of this Masque was Mr. Aurelian Townshend, sometime steward to the Lord Treasurer Salisbury; Ben Jonson being for this time discarded by reason of the predominant power of his antagonist, Inigo Jones, who, this time twelvemonth, was angry with him for putting his own name before his in the title-page....[14]

Jonson's insistence on the supremacy of the poetical part is another manifestation of the respect for intellect, the "understanding part", which permeated the thinking of the satirist. Such an attitude is apparent in the opening lines of *Hymenaei*:

> It is a noble and just advantage, that the things subjected to *understanding* have of

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[14] Quoted in: Cunningham, Peter, *The Life of Inigo Jones* in *Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson*, The Shakespeare Society, London, 1853, p. 27

> those which are objected to sense, that the one sort are but momentarie, and meerely taking; the other impressing, and lasting: Else the glorie of all these solemnities had perish'd like a blaze, and gone out, in the beholders eyes.
>
> ...
>
> And, howsoever some may squemishly crie out, that all endevour of learning, and sharpnesse in these transitorie devices especially, where it steps beyond their little, or (let me not wrong 'hem) no braine at all, is superfluous....
>
> *Hymenaei*, 1-6, 19-23

Even the ethereal masque was, for Jonson, the occasion of serious thought and endeavour. The Oxford Editors, in a long and thorough discussion of his masques, say:

> The slightness of these shows was no reason, with Jonson, for perfunctory treatment; he carved the clay as assiduously and with as much cunning of hand and of thought as though it were marble.
>
> ...
>
> More exclusively than ever he addressed himself to the elect; the throng of groundlings, who were able to enforce their judgement in the Globe or the Revels, might here be ignored; and the possibility of using a recondite, symbolic speech, eloquent to 'the sharpe and learned', was assuredly one of the bonds which attached Jonson to the Masque.
>
> 15.

Jonson was again espousing an unpopular theory. The visual splendors of the masque, and the combination of brilliant costumes and scenes with music and dancing were the principal attractions of the performance for most people of the time. An illustration of this preference for spectacle which ran counter to Jonson's

15. Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 261-2

preference for poetry is provided in a quotation from Daniel's preface to Tethys' Festival:

> The art and invention of the Architect gives the greatest grace, and is of most importance.
> 16.

In the quarrel which developed, Jonson had one advantage, for as a writer, he had opportunity to publish his opinion of the architect. Jones used such means as he had to confound the poet, however, and he used his influence at court to prevent the employment of Jonson's pen. After 1624 only two more masques by Jonson, Love's Triumph Through Callipolis and Chlorida, were performed at court. Only two other entertainments by Jonson appeared after 1624 and these were written for his patron, the Earl of Newcastle, and were performed in that gentleman's houses. It is also a matter of record that Jones secured the deletion of certain passages in A Tale of a Tub:

> R(eceived) for allowinge of The Tale of the Tubb, Vitruvius Hoop's parte wholly struck out, and the motion of the tubb, by commande from my lorde chamberlin; exceptions being taken against it by Inigo Jones, surveyor of the Kings Workes, as a personal injury unto him.
> 17.

Thus, the struggle was not one-sided. If Jonson heaped abuse on Jones, the designer replied with deeds rather

16. As quoted by Herford and Simpson, Op. cit., vol. 1, p. 61
17. Cunningham, Peter, Op. cit., p. 29

than words and hurt Jonson's fortunes by using his influence at court against him.

Confronted with the sad spectacle of two great artists in bitter dispute, we see how rising anger outweighed the critical integrity of the poet. The Oxford Editors sum up Jonson's representation of Jones' character in an appendix and distinguish five main characteristics:

> 1. Inigo is a puppet-master and a society entertainer, in fact a cheapjack of art.
> 2. Inigo insists on precedence: he is 'architect', 'designer', 'inventor', dictator, and monopolist.
> 3. He is a mechanic, witness his cheap lighting-effects.
> 4. He is ignorant, especially of Latin, and despises learning.
> 5. He is dishonest.
> 18.

Only the second of these characteristics can be substantiated by reference to Jones' most important biographer, Cunningham. The validity of this estimation of Jones is not discussed by Herford and Simpson, but when such a characteristic as number four, which is obviously false, is included in the list, it casts doubt on the entire estimate of Jones. The suggestion that Jones was ignorant is true only in the narrow sense that he was not the equal of Jonson in classical scholarship. But he had travelled abroad and was a keen student of the Italian architect, Andrea Palladio.

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18. Herford and Simpson, _Op_. _cit_., vol. X, pp. 690-2

Jonson's readiness to level any criticism at Jones is seen in "To Inigo Marquess Would Be" (circa. 1631):

> But cause thou hearst ye mighty k. of Spaine
> Hath made his Inigo Marquess, wouldst thou fayne
> Our Charles should make thee such? T'will not become
> All kings to doe ye self same deeds with some!
> Besydes, his Man may merit it, and be
> A Noble honest Soule! what's this to thee?
> He may have skill & judgment to designe
> Cittyes & Temples! thou a Cave for Wyne,
> Or Ale! He build a pallace! Thou a shopp
> With slyding windowes, & false Lights a top!
> Ungathered Verse, XXXV, 1-10

Jonson could not have been so ignorant of architecture as utterly to mistake the quality of Jones' work. The argument that Jones was suited only for the designing of shops and cellars is an outrageous insult to the predecessor of Christopher Wren of whom it has been said:

> The Revolution put an end to Jones's work, as it did to almost all building in the country, and Jones died before the Restoration in 1660. Yet in his work he succeeded in setting the course English architecture was to follow for another century.
> 19.

If Jonson was willing to stoop to such unfounded disparagement of Jones' architectural skill, we may suspect that the more extreme of his personal criticisms of the man are also pure fabrications. Examples of personal villification can be found in two epigrams: "On the

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19. Hamlin, T. Architecture Through the Ages, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1953, p. 385. See also: Loftie, W. J., Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren, Rivington, Percival and Co., London, 1893

Townes Honest Man" and "To Mime". The first of these contains the aspersion of Jones:

> Can sing songs, and catches;
> Give every one his dose of mirth: and watches
> Whose name's un-welcome to the present eare,
> And him it layes on; if he be not there.
> Tell's of him, all the tales, it selfe then makes;
> But, if it shall be question'd, under-takes,
> It will deny all....
>
> Epigrams, CXV, 13-19

The second epigram is less offensive, as it pertains only to Jones' alleged attempts to entertain:

> That, not a paire of friends each other see,
> But the first question is, when one saw thee?
> That there's no journey set, or thought upon,
> To Braynford, Hackney, Bow, but thou mak'st one;
> That scarse the Towne designeth any feast
> To which thou'rt not a weeke, bespoke a guest;
> That still th'art made the suppers flagge, the drum,
> The very call, to make all others come:
> Think'st thou, MIME, this is great? or, that they strive
> Whose noyse shall keepe thy miming most alive,
> Whil'st thou dost rayse some Player, from the grave,
> Out-dance the Babion, or out-boast the Brave;
> Or (mounted on a stoole) thy face doth hit
> On some new gesture, that's imputed wit?
> O, runne not proud of this. Yet, take thy due.
> Thou dost out-zany COKELY, POD; nay, GUE:
> And thine owne CORIAT too. But (would'st thou see)
> Men love thee not for this: They laugh at thee.
>
> Epigrams, CXXIX

If Inigo Jones actually attempted such ridiculous impersonations, none of his biographers has seen fit to record the fact.

Jonson's representation of Jones as a zany mimic is apparently an effort to discredit the designer by pictur-

ing him as a fatuous creature akin to the fops of Jonsonian social satire. Only the fact that Jones is several times compared to Cokely and the fact that the comparisons of Jones with Gue, "a quick change artist",[20] and with Coryat are specific lends an air of veracity to Jonson's charges. Would Jonson have insisted upon Jones' predilection for mimicry on five separate occasions, three times with specific references to known mimics of the time, were there no grounds for the assertion?[21.] In all probability Jones had a tendency towards mimicry, but Jonson has exaggerated the characteristic. What was probably a harmless quirk, or perhaps even amusing, becomes foul and vicious in satiric representation.

The charge that Jones was a backbiter appears only in the epigram quoted above:

> ...and watches
> Whose name's un-welcome to the present eare,
> And him it layes on; if he be not there.
> Tell's of him, all the tales, it selfe then
> makes....
>
> *Epigrams*, CXV, 14-17

That the charge is extreme and that it is only voiced once suggests it is as false as the idea that Jones is only fit to design shops and cellars.

A final estimation of Jonson's attack on Jones

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20. Herford and Simpson, *Op. cit.*, vol. X, p. 690
21. In addition to the quoted epigrams see: *A Tale of a Tub*, V, ii, 33; and *Bartholomew Fair*, III, iv, 124-9 and V, i, 6-8

would be that anger and jealousy were more vital to the attack than critical integrity. The long-growing quarrel between the two artists engendered a bitterness that removed Jonson's outbursts from the traditional pattern of "flyting". His ridicule of Jones was no mere exercise of his pen for the public's amusement. Jonson never regarded questions about the value of poetry lightly. Inigo Jones was doubly the object of Jonson's hatred, and he rounded on him more furiously than he had rounded on Marston and Dekker. He hated Jones' claim to primacy in the creating of masques, and he hated Jones' emergence as the most favored artist at the court of Charles.

That the poet who had found no small measure of satisfaction at the hands of James was an alien spirit in the new Court is pointed out by Herford and Simpson in their discussion of this phase of the poet's career:

> The young queen herself, with the fastidious disdain of her French breeding, heightened by the delicacy of a _précieuse_ for all things English, was not likely to be captivated by this 'tun of man' outwardly the most ruggedly English personage, without doubt, in the entire Court circle. 22.

We can understand how the quarrel grew more bitter, and how desperately Jonson sought for means to hurt Inigo

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22. Herford and Simpson, _Op_. _cit_., vol. I, pp. 90-1

Jones as the designer advanced to happier fortunes while Jonson became a paralytic recluse. But sympathy for the bedridden poet must not obscure the fact that before the year 1616, when Jonson's prospects were yet bright and his health was unimpaired, he had launched bitter attacks at Jones. Jonson's confidence in the artistry of his masques and his faith in the supreme value of poetry never made him impervious to a challange or objection to his assumption of supremacy. He was painfully sensitive on all questions involving his own merit and the virtue of poetry itself because these things were vitally important to him. While we reprehend his violent and frequently unfair retorts against his opponents, we must respect the dedication to his art which prompted them. Adding to the fury of outraged pride, were Jonson's turbulent emotions which, at height, were not to be curbed by his reasoned critical standards. No matter how often he advanced rational arguments demonstrating the supreme worth of poetry his powerful feelings had still to be satisfied in an irrational way. Ironically, it was precisely the interplay of genuine devotion to his art with his robust temper which produced the torrents of indiscriminate abuse that Jonson poured upon his some-time collaborator.

E. Conclusions

The review of Jonson's comments on such diverse subjects as: religion, lawyers, gullibility, and Inigo Jones leads to some interesting conclusions concerning his critical integrity and fairness. Generally speaking, Jonson was a critic of integrity as long as he was not under criticism himself. As his feud with Inigo Jones clearly reveals, Jonson was not dispassionate, objective, or logical in answering to those who challenged him on any point. There was a certain blunt honesty in Jonson's angry retorts, for he never tried to conceal his dislikes, and we can be sure he would have bitten off his tongue before making any concessions to those he had set himself against. Doubtless, this trait of stern resolution is deep-rooted in human nature and may be a kind of virtue in times of stress, but it is not conducive to the highest intellectual attainments. It is certainly damaging to Jonson's reputation for critical integrity.

Fortunately, the poet was not always in an ill temper, and most of his comments on religion, lawyers, and gullibility reflect his faith in reason. It is clear that religion is not, for him, purely a matter of faith. He demands that men understand the principles of their religion, and that they serve God on more than the ceremonial level. His disdain for the Puritans is

another example of emotion affecting judgement. He is so annoyed by their stern asceticism, which was frequently an actual challenge to his profession, that he fails to make an unbiased attempt to understand the nature of their creed. It is his personal dislike of a particular sect which colors his judgement. Otherwise, he is consistent in taking the same reasoned view of religion that he does of other subjects.

In his comments on lawyers and gullibility, Jonson, without exception, reaffirms his fundamental faith in reason. He also emphasizes the need to control our desires, particularly our greed, and in so doing he is basing his pronouncements on the same critical standards which directed his broader social criticism.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey of Jonson's criticism and the examination of the underlying principles yeilds a clear if not surprising picture of Jonson's ideal world. It is a world dominated by reason: a world scented by the ink-pot and the lamp. The glories of nature do not pervade Jonson's imagery, and he does not exhort us to find truth and goodness by the contemplation of God's creation. Most often, he advises us to open books, to study the best authors, and to prefer carefully wrought logic to flights of fancy. And yet, this ideal world is not narrowly academic. Jonson's respect for learning does not make him an enemy of all pleasure, and he does not even utterly abhor frivolity. He only insists that men should not over-value idle diversions by making them their serious studies.

Reason, then, is not the sole guiding principle in Jonson's ideal world. Moderation, another aspect of the sense of decorum which figures prominently in Jonson's criticism of drama, is an almost equally important principle. Men are not to be restricted to purely intellectual activities, but each activity must be given its proper place. Always Jonson asserts that men must know what they are doing. If they choose to divert themselves, all is well so long as they value diversions only as respites from more serious tasks and do not make frivolous pastimes their main preoccupation.

The faults which particularly offend Jonson's faith in reason and moderation are: greed, stupidity, pride, and affectation. Affectation may be interpreted as the result of pride and stupidity, but Jonson so frequently portrays men and women who struggle to affect singular modes of speech, conduct, or dress that we may assume he regarded affectation as a distinct fault. If reason and moderation are the criteria for the evaluation of human conduct they are also the criteria for Jonson's criticisms of drama, religion, and the profession of law. In drama decorum is the keynote as the speeches, for example, are to be valued for their fitness according to the characters who utter them and the places in which they are uttered rather than being valued for any absolute qualities. Careful thought is required to achieve this

proper fitting of speeches, and careful thought is even more obviously fundamental to Jonson's concern for the right use of language. A good play is a triumph of intellect, a result of dilligent effort, and Jonson maintains reason and a strong sense of decorum as the playwright's most important qualities. In attacking the Puritans and the well-crammed divines, Jonson was again preaching moderation and was cautioning us against bending too far backwards as well as warning us against falling on our faces. Lawyers are, in his view, necessary only because men will not act reasonably and hence fall victim to their own greed.

Thus, the ideal world founded on reason and moderation is clearly in Jonson's mind whenever he attempts serious criticism. His own robust spirit occasionally subverted his faith in reason and moderation, and his principles suffered as his anger increased. But the unhappy moments when he reviled Inigo Jones or roundly abused Marston and Dekker were exceptions. Most of his criticism is reasonable and moderate. The result of his great faith in his two guiding principles is a surprising harmony in the greater portion of his criticism. His observations on drama are fundamentally related to his social criticism and to his criticism of religion. Jonson's ideals are clearly and frequently reflected in his plays.

Holding to such ideals as reason and moderation, Jonson emerges as a universal critic. His strictures against affectation, for example, could be directed against the fops of any society. The more irresponsible denizens of Hollywood could be the butts of his social satire just as well as Daw, La Foole, and Politique Would-Bee. Jonson's literary criticism and his advice to study the best writers are as pertinent now as when first uttered. Jonson's plays are as much reflections of humanity as they are reflections of Jacobean and Elizabethan England. He does his best work in an English setting, but the setting provides the details of the work not the core. The core of Jonson's work is incisive criticism of the common failings of mankind.

Major References

The works listed in this section are either frequently quoted or provided important background information for understanding Jonson's attitudes.

Durant, Will, The Life of Greece, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1939
Durant, Will, Caesar and Christ, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1944

These histories are packed with anecdotes and incidents from classical times, with the result that Durant offers a lively and detailed history. The author's grasp of the economic and social dynamics of the age and his appreciation of classic culture combine to make his books sympathetic and incisive. Since he applied himself to all of Jonson's favorite classical writers as well as to many other sources, his works provide a useful criterion for judging Jonson's interpretation of Greek and Roman history.

Herford and Simpson, Ben Jonson, Oxford, 1925-52, XI Vols.

The six volumes of facsimile reproductions of the earliest available editions of Jonson's works provided by Herford and Simpson are the best texts now obtainable. The three volumes of notes afford a wealth of contemporary and classical references as well as specific information about Jonson's technique and intention in particular passages. The first two volumes of the set include a brief life of Jonson crammed with all the available data and a series of critical essays, each of which is an introduction to one of the plays. Scattered throughout the set are terse surveys of the text of each play, appendices touching on important problems of authorship and intention in various plays, as well as stage histories of the plays. The Oxford Edition is a compendium of information essential to an understanding of Jonson.

Lamson and Smith, The Golden Hind, W. W. Norton and Co., New York, 1942

This anthology of non-dramatic Elizabethan poetry and prose provides an interesting sample of the writing of Jonson's immediate predecessors and early contemporaries. Since Jonson was so much an admirer of Sir Philip Sidney and was so much influenced by Sidney's Apology for Poetry, the selection from Sidney's work, including the Apology, is indeed helpful.

Neilson and Hill, Shakespeare, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1942

Some comparisons with Shakespeare are inevitable in discussing Jonson's dramatic writings--both from point of view of technique and content. Except for G. B. Harrison's Introducing Shakespeare, Neilson and Hill's book is the only work dealing exclusively with Shakespeare that is cited in the bibliography. Harrison's book is included as a minor reference because it was referred to for verification of the identity of Shakespeare's company.

Parks and Beatty, The English Drama,(900-1642), W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1935

This anthology, which excludes the work of Shakespeare, provides a useful sampling of the dramatic predecessors and contemporaries of Jonson. In particular, the work of Jonson's contemporaries was read in order to determine how unique his interest in didactic drama was for the time, and how his attitude compared to the attitudes of other dramatists of the period.

Minor References

No volume of English History is cited as a reference because the specific background material provided by Herford and Simpson was more enlightening than volumes of history could have been and therefore no special attempt was made to study the history of the period. Books such as those by Baum and Dunn, which are included in the bibliography, provided some historical information. A Literary History of England was also helpful in filling in details of the milieu in which Jonson

worked. The biography of Inigo Jones provided general background information in addition to specific information about the character of Jones. Such works as Marchette Chute's *Ben Jonson of Westminster* and Eric Linklater's *Ben Jonson and King James*, for example, are not included in the bibliography because, for the purpose of this study, they added nothing to the information provided by Herford and Simpson.

Works of other Writers (Writers represented in the anthologies previously listed are not mentioned here.)

Dryden, John, *Poetry, Prose and Plays*, selected by Douglas Grant, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1952

Milton, John, *Poetical Works*, edited by H. C. Beeching, Oxford, 1950
Milton, John, *Selected Prose*, edited by M. W. Wallace, Oxford, 1947

Translations (Since the Oxford Editors seldom translate the classical authors they cite as sources, I found it necessary to read some translations of ancient writers as well as a translation of one learned contemporary of Jonson.)

Aristophanes, *Works*, translated by B. B. Rogers, William Heinemann, London, 1931 (especially the *Plutus*)

Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, translated by L. F. Dean, Packard and Company, Chicago, 1946

Juvenal, *Juvenal and Persius*, translated by G. G. Ramsay, William Heinemann, London, 1930

Lucian, *Works*, translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, Oxford, 1905

Martial, *Epigrams*, translated by W. C. A. Kerr, William Heinemann, London, 1925

Virgil, *Aeneid*, translated by C. Day Lewis, Doubleday, New York, 1953

Critical Commentaries

Baugh, Brooke, Chew, Malone, and Sherburn, A Literary History of England, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1948

Baum, H. W., The Satiric and the Didactic in Ben Jonson's Comedy, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1947

Cunningham, Peter, The Life of Inigo Jones, The Shakespeare Society, London, 1853

Dunn, E. C., Ben Jonson's Art, printed for Smith College, Northhampton, 1925

Hamlin, T., Architecture Through the Ages, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1953

Harrison, G. B., Introducing Shakespeare, The New American Library, New York, 1947

Loftie, W. J., Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren, Rivington, Percival and Co., London, 1893

Russell, Bertrand, A History of Western Philosophy, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1948

Articles

Nash, R., "The Comic Intent of Volpone," Studies in Philology, Vol. XLIV

Talbert, E. W., "The Purpose and Technique of Jonson's Poetaster," Studies in Philology, Vol. XLII

Talbert, E. W., "The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles," Publications of the Modern Language Association, Vol. LXI
This article was checked too late to be added as a footnote in the proper section, but is cited here because it advances an argument collateral to the one offered on page 17 of Section I.

Jonson's willingness to combine advice with praise,

which was noted in the discussion of his epigrams and addresses in Section I, is also evident in his masques and entertainments if Talbert's argument is accepted. He writes:

> And the voice of Jonson's courtly spectacle, I submit, is that of the panegyrie _laudando praecipere_; the sense, that of precepts _de regimine principum_ enlarged by the ethical-political _credo_ of a staunch Renaissance humanist.
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> p. 473

Addendum

Enck, John J., _Jonson and the comic truth_, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1957

Published too recently to be of use in the preparation of this thesis, Mr. Enck's book is a perceptive study of Jonson. One fears that the intricate interpretations of the symbols Mr. Enck descries in every one of the plays are sometimes far-fetched, but the attempt to judge Jonson by the standards of comedy and in terms of the playwright's own definitions of purpose and technique result in an illuminating examination of the satirist.

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